God in Everything

FRANK · M · GOODCHILD

Central BAPTIST
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in memoriam

H. A. BOLIE

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GOD IN EVERYTHING

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A Series of Popular Nature Studies

By

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"Can We Believe?" and "Around the Lord's Table"

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To

THEODORE FRANKLIN GOODCHILD
and
ROBERT MARSDEN GOODCHILD
My Grandsons

With the prayer that they may daily grow
in grace and in the knowledge of God
through His word and His works

28084

FOREWORD

Mary Russell Mitford reminded us that "We are to receive more from the covering vault than the light and the dew which we share with the weed and the worm." Indeed we can decide how high our place among created beings is by how much we can learn from the beings and things about us. God's people through all ages have been conscious of the divine presence with them. They could say truly, "In Him we live and move and have our being." Nature could not be dull and prosaic to them. Every object about them is sure to be vocal with a message about God's wisdom and his love. A walk through the fields, if one has this spirit, will send one back atingle with gratitude to God and exhilarated with a sense of his care.

It has been my habit in my long ministry to preach an occasional nature-sermon. The response from the people has always been

immediate and positive in appreciation. Such sermons have been quoted years after they were spoken. And the requests for their publication still continue to come. In response to these requests a few of these sermons are here given. May they bring many near to nature's heart, and close to nature's God.

F. M. G.

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I

THE MESSAGE OF THE BIRDS

Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.

—*Luke 12: 6, 7.*

THE MESSAGE OF THE BIRDS

God has given to us two Bibles. One of them is the book of nature, the other is the book of grace. The book of nature is just as much God's word as the Bible is. Sometimes Christ took his text from the Scriptures; sometimes he took it from nature. He recognized both of them as volumes divinely inspired. In one of his sermons he pressed a lily. In another we hear a lost sheep bleating—symbol of a poor sinner lost in the wilderness of his own misdeeds. In another he makes the fish swarming into a net teach us a needed lesson about the kingdom of God. In another still we hear clearly the caroling of a bird's voice.

The Bible will not be limited in the choice of its symbols. There is hardly a flower that blooms, or a beast that roams, or a bird that flies, or an insect that swings on a blade of grass in the summer meadow that has not been used by it to illustrate for us some divine truth. We are told that as many as 593 times the Bible alludes to the facts of

natural history. We have presented to us there the gorgeous robe of the wayside lily, the ox's patience, the ant's industry, the spider's skill, the hind's surefootedness, the eagle's speed, the dove's gentleness; and here in the text we have the sparrow's insignificance used to emphasize a comforting truth.

Over forty species of birds are mentioned in the Bible, and of each one some curious, significant thing is said. Twenty times the Bible speaks of birds' nests, and they well deserve this frequent mention, for they are wonderful pieces of architecture. What masons, what carpenters, what weavers, what spinners, the birds are! Out of what limited resources they build their habitations, out of mosses, out of sticks, out of grass, out of horsehair, out of threads that you sweep out of your house, out of the wool of the sheep in the pasture-field. Take an abandoned nest some time, and see from how wide a field its materials were gathered. Sometimes it is cushioned with feathers from the bird's own breast, and it is cemented together with the gum of trees and the saliva of its maker's own tiny bill.

Fifty times the Bible speaks of a bird's wing, literally or figuratively—the wings of a dove, the wings of the morning, the wings of the wind, the wings of the Almighty, the Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings, and all fowl of every wing. And the Bible is full of the singing of birds. The day before man was made the birds were created. I have thought that God so planned it that the first sound that greeted man's ears might be a bird song. Francis of Assisi went out one day and preached a sermon to the birds and pronounced a benediction on them. And the birds have paid back his work with interest. All of them preach to us, and they put their benedictions into melodious song.

Charmed as we are when we study other features of nature, when we come to read God's thoughts in the structure and the habits of birds our fascination is complete. The birds seem more of heaven than of earth—winged spirits that belong to some fairer world than ours, sent here as messengers of peace and bearers of better nourishment for the soul than the raven brought morning and evening to refresh Elijah's

body. One of the first things the baby notices is the birds hopping about in the street or alighting on the window-sill. One of the last things the aged grandfather does is to go out and scatter a handful of crumbs to feed the birds. I do not wonder that Audubon, with his gun, tramped through all the American forests in search of new specimens of bird life. I do not wonder that geologists have spent years studying the tracks of birds in the rocks. I do not wonder that musicians have with clefs and bars tried to catch the song of the nightingale and the robin. I do not wonder that Henry D. Thoreau was so in love with the birds that he went into the woods and lived with them and made them his companions. I do not wonder that Shelley was so carried away by the song of the skylark that when he wrote his famous ode to it, he attributed to it such wonderful powers that we ask ourselves which is the greater being, the skylark singing as it mounts to heaven, or the poet down here on earth watching its flight and interpreting its song.

The Bible is full of allusions to birds. And the birds of the Bible are not dead and

stuffed like those you see in some museum. They are living birds, with fluttering wings and gay plumage, chirruping and twittering out the lessons that God would have them teach us. And there is scarcely a truth that God needs to impress upon us that he does not impart to us through these winged creatures of his—the birds. Does Moses wish to teach us the necessity of learning self-dependence? He says, "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings," so the Lord above did to Israel. Does Job wish to exalt God's wisdom and show man's littleness? He writes it down: "Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacock?" Does David wish to describe his utter loneliness and desolation? He says: "I am like a pelican in the wilderness. I am like an owl of the desert. I watch and am as a sparrow upon the housetop." Does he wish to express the soul's longing to be delivered from the world's cares? He says, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest." Does Obadiah wish to denounce man's pride and to predict swift

retribution? He says, "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." Does Solomon wish to sum up all the glories of the springtime in one sentence? He says, "The time of the singing of birds is come." Does Jeremiah wish to show man's lack of sagacity? He says: "Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed time; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people doth not know the judgment of the Lord." Does Ezekiel wish to show how all the world will enjoy the benefits of the Saviour's work? He says, "He shall be a goodly cedar, and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing." Does Isaiah wish to speak of the day when multitudes from every nation shall be gathered to Christ? It makes him think of a flock of pigeons alighting near their cote, and all trying at once to enter the cote, and he says, "Who are these that fly as a cloud to their windows?" Does the Saviour wish to teach a lesson of God's providence? He says: "Behold the fowls of the air. They sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather

into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?" And when he would illustrate his own tender mercy and men's hardness of heart he says: "How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings. And ye would not." May God help us to apply to our own lives some of the many lessons he would teach us by the birds.

The first and most primary lesson the birds teach us is a lesson about God's care. This is the lesson that the Master himself taught from them, and to impress the lesson he took one of the commonest and least esteemed of birds—the sparrow. In Oriental countries none but the poorest people buy the sparrow to eat it. There is very little meat on the bones, and what there is of it is very poor. The sparrow brought the lowest price of any game. They were the smallest and cheapest living creature that could be offered in sacrifice under the Mosaic law. It was the cleansed leper, reduced by his separation to the extremest poverty, who was allowed to bring this mean offering of the two sparrows. They were not worth so

much as a cent apiece. "Five for two farthings" was the price. The word translated farthing was *assarion*. It was worth about a cent and a half. The price of these sparrows then was five for three cents. And yet as the Saviour looked up at these little birds, wheeling, circling, darting about in countless throngs among the domes and minarets of the city, he said: "God cares for every one of them. Much more will he, your Father, care for you. You are of more value than many sparrows."

We are apt to see God's hand only in great events that affect the whole race. We can see a divine purpose in such a thing as the discovery of America, or the invention of printing, or the exposure of the Gunpowder Plot, or the ruin of the Napoleonic despotism, or the defeat of Germany in the World War when the "Comrade in white" led the discouraged soldiers. But it is difficult to see God in the little personal affairs of our daily lives. We think it worthy of God that he should make a list of the stars, but we cannot realize the Bible teaching that he counts the 140,000 hairs there are on the average head, though some of us have fewer

than that. It seems a great thing to provide food for hundreds of thousands of Israelites in the wilderness; that befits God's dignity. But we cannot appreciate the truth that when a sparrow is hungry God stoops down and puts the food in when it opens its mouth. We are impressed with the thought that God fills the universe, but we cannot understand how he can dwell in the crystal palace of a dewdrop, or find room for himself in the narrow abode of a human heart. We can see God in the clouds; but it is difficult to see him in a little flower. It is easy to see him in the life of some great man, a Washington, a Lincoln, a Cromwell, or a Gladstone. But it is not easy to believe that every event of our little lives is under the divine inspection and care. But that is what the text is intended to teach us. The same God who shows the chaffinch how to take care of her brood will protect us, his children. The same God who shows the sparrow in the springtime how to build its nest will give us a habitation. The same God who this day feeds the hundreds of different kinds of birds you find in the woods will feed us. The same God who gathers the down for the pheasant's

breast will give us apparel. The same God who guides the humming-bird in its swift flight from flower to flower will guide us all the way along life's pathway. Praise his name. None of us is so insignificant as to miss his care.

Oh you who are so fretted and worried about your affairs, about your health, about your reputation, worried about your children, worried about your property, worried about everything, go out and look at the sparrows flying about and chirping their confidence in God's care and ask yourself, "Has not the Saviour said I am of more value than many sparrows?" Listen to the Saviour's assurance as to a divine lullaby and put your head down on the bosom of God's compassion and find rest there. "Oh," some one says, "that idea belittles God so. You bring him down from his throne to attend to such trivial things." But daily I am coming to have a greater appreciation of God in little things than in great things. The mother does not wait until the child has crushed its foot or broken its arm before she gives it her sympathy. The child comes in with the least scratch or bruise, and

the mother kisses and heals the hurt; God does not wait for some tremendous crisis in our life, but comes down to us in all our trials and throws about us the arms of his love.

Now you have noticed this striking thing about Christ's outlook upon nature. He is never disturbed by what he sees. I have no doubt that he saw the darker side of nature. He did not shut his eyes to evil as I heard Mrs. Stetson counsel the Christian Scientists to do, when a man fell in a fit during a testimony meeting one evening. Christ saw all of life, and he was not soured by it. He was not filled with melancholy about it as so many are when they cannot see the meaning of things. He did not whine out as Schopenhauer did, that this is as bad a world as could possibly be made. I have no doubt that Christ felt the mystery of nature. But he never was burdened by it as our thinkers and poets are. Wordsworth speaks of the weary weight of all this unintelligible world. Christ saw all that others see, and more than others see of the darker side of nature. He knew that the whole creation groans and travails in pain. When he saw the lilies of

the field he knew that soon they would be laid low and withered. He saw everywhere what seems so cruel and terrible and ghastly to us. He saw the carcass on the bare hillside, and the vultures gathering to feast upon it. He saw the serpent coiled in the grass ready for the deadly spring. He watched the sparrow, one moment all alert and chipper, and the next moment a little heap of feathers, dead. He was familiar with all the questions that these things raise in our minds, but his trust in God was not disturbed by them. His mind was always serene. He could see the shadow that lies across the world everywhere, and yet he could walk about with a confident and joyful heart. And I often think that that alone is a sufficient proof of Christ's divinity. Christ in the fields shows himself as much divine in the way he looks at things, as he does when his mighty voice calls back the dead to life at the grave of Lazarus. In a world where there is so much mystery and pain there are only two beings who can be undisturbed. One is the dumb beast who does no thinking about the mysteries of nature. The other is the Son of God who knows his

Father's purpose in it all. Jesus Christ knew as well as any of us how much awry things seem to be, and indeed how much awry things are in this world of sin, but he knew also that for those who trust themselves to God's care all things are working together for good. He knew better than any one else that God has things in his control. He did not have to make a vague guess as Tennyson did when he said,

> Oh, yet we trust that somehow good
> Will be the final end of ill.

He knew it to be true for all who will let God manage their affairs. He could say with more confidence than Faber could command:

> Ill that God blesses is our good,
> And unblest good is ill;
> And all is right that seems most wrong,
> If it be his dear will.

Indeed Christ was constantly insisting that it was the adversities of our lives that mark God's care. It was the fall of the sparrow that he declared to have the notice of the Father.

Christ said that the dead sparrow that you

find sometimes on the sidewalk teaches you this lesson, that the calamities of our lives as well as our successes are sent from above. Of course that is not our usual way of thinking. We can see a divine providence in things which please us, but we are blind to it, and practically deny it in others. Some man says: "I meant to take that train that met with such a frightful accident, but I was delayed and missed it. There was a providence in it." So there was, and it is well that the man is able to recognize it. But if he is a Christian man it would have been just as much of a providence if he had taken the train and his name had appeared in the list of the dead. Another man cries with a sort of awe in his voice: "The hand of God surely was in my experience. It was a mere chance that I missed that steamer that went down in mid-ocean." But does he mean to say that God had forsaken all who took passage on the boat, and who went down with it? Death stood at the helm when friends said farewell to one another. Death reached out in front of the figurehead and pointed the way. Death was among her shrouds as she stood

out to sea. Death screamed in the night-watches through her rigging. But had God forsaken her? A dismal belief in providence that is. I do not believe that God cares for me and directs my affairs on certain days of my life, and lets them take their own way on other days. I do not believe in a God whose hand is with me in joy and withdrawn from me in sorrow. God's care is manifested, if we will but see it, in every moment of our lives, and in one moment as much as in any other. That is not a true or worthy view of God that teaches that it is the loftiest achievement of his providence to lift us out of temporal difficulties. That is a very low sort of a prayer that I have often heard which says, "We thank thee, O Lord, that while others suffer, we are prospered." That is a nobler prayer that was offered in Gethsemane that says, "Not my will, but thine, be done," and that recognizes that a Father's hand instead of removing the cup might hold it to our lips until it is drained to the dregs.

A missionary coming from India to the United States stopped at St. Helena while the vessel was taking water. He had his

little child with him. They walked along by the embankment, and a rock at that moment became loosened and fell and instantly killed the child. Was that an accident that God had not foreseen and provided for? Was it a surprise to God? Had he allowed his servant, after a life of consecrated service, to come to such a trial without its having any beneficent purpose? My God is not of that sort. There are no accidents to him. Nothing goes by chance to him. God is unfailingly good, and by and by he will demonstrate before heaven and earth that in every single incident in our lives, whether it seemed prosperous or adverse, he showed his mercy. Mark you, it is the fall of the sparrow that he notes, and none falls without his permission.

And it seems to me that *the birds should teach us a lesson of cheerfulness.* The bird is a synonym of happiness. We speak of the young as being as gay and light-hearted as a bird. Musicians have listened in the woods and have written down in their portfolios the notes of the birds' gladness—the libretto of the forests, it might be called. They have found the songs of the birds

almost without exception cheerful. Oh the wisdom of God in the making of a bird's voice, the warble of a lark, the sweet call of the robin, the carol of a canary, and the twitter of a sparrow!

And remember that the birds sing when they have serious work on hand. They sing while gathering food for their young. They sing in that most trying task of changing their habitation. A tremendous task that of the annual flight to the south. They are worn out by it. They reach their destination thin and disheveled. And yet they brighten the whole weary way with song. Without the song the wings would lose their elasticity, and would not be equal to the long journey. Would to God that men had that habit of easing their toil by song! If we had the disposition to do it, there is hardly a day in our lives when we could not strike a cheerful note in the morning and keep it up till night. The dullest, most wearisome tasks would become agreeable if they were accompanied by the strains of "Happy Day" or "Joy to the World." I remember a cobbler on his bench with a large family dependent on him, who used to cheer his days by sing-

ing Charles Wesley's hymns. I knew a woman who lightened her kitchen toil by humming some one of Isaac Watts's hymns. It brightens all the day. I verily believe there is no fit of the blues so dense that strains of Christian song cannot penetrate it and dissipate it; and no discord arising from life's sorrows and disappointments that a heartfelt hallelujah would not turn into peace. We do not know the power of Christian song. Any riot that ever raged in the streets would be quieted sooner by a full choir singing "Now Thank We All Our God," than by a blast from cannons' throats. If when the Stock Exchange is in a panic, and men feel their riches slipping away, you could let the strains of

> My Father is rich in houses and lands,
> He holdeth the wealth of the world in his hands,

sound out over the tumult, all would speedily be quieted. Some one asked Joseph Haydn why he always composed such cheerful music. He had had much sorrow in his life, but he answered: "I cannot do otherwise. When I think of God my soul is so full of joy that the notes leap and dance from my

pen." With our lives here filled with God's mercies, with our future girt about by God's promises, with an eternity of bliss assured us, with a happy reunion with our dear ones as certain as though we had already entered upon it, with everlasting fellowship with such a Saviour as we have to complete the happiness of heaven, we ought to be able to sound out every day our acclamations of victory. Every day of joy here will be but an anticipation of that great day that is to dawn for us on the hills of heaven. Oh what doxologies we shall hear then, sweeter than all the bird anthems of earth! And we shall have part in them. Every hand will hold a harp. Every voice will strike the note of rapture. All will be ecstasy. The song will be soft as infant's lullaby, but it will be as loud as a storm too. Chorus of elders, chorus of saints, chorus of the martyrs, chorus of the redeemed, whom no man can number, while the angels look on in wonder. This is the thing which the angels desire to look into, man's own peculiar song. This is the refrain of it: "Unto him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests

unto God, unto him be glory world without end. Amen."

Again, *God commends to us the birds' sagacity in their flight.* Just as soon as they feel the first nip of the coming frost they will flee southward. Just as soon as the shrill notes of the north winds sound out, they will beat a retreat. They come together into their own groups, and hindered by nothing, lured aside by nothing, they make their flight over land and sea, until they come to the very place in the warm Southland where they spent their last Christmas Day. Oh, that men acknowledged the urge of the Spirit as the birds do! Oh, that we were as wise as the birds when they fly away from the winter's cold and tempest! How often the Saviour lamented that men did not know about the times and the seasons. But we wait, we loiter; we temporize. And when at last we start, it is too late. The old prophet Jeremiah was entirely right when looking up at the sky and observing the timely flight of the birds, he turned away and thought how much superior to men are the birds in sagacity about their safety. And then he took his pen and wrote it down:

"The stork in the heaven knoweth its appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming. But my people knoweth not the judgment of the Lord."

And I cannot resist the suggestion that our departure from this world is like nothing so much as a bird's flight to a more salubrious clime. The soul has wings. They may not be like seraph's wings. But the soul has wings. The Bible says so. It says, "He shall mount up with wings like eagles." We are made in the image of God, and God has wings. The Bible says so. It speaks of "healing in his wings." It says, "under the shadow of his wings." It says, "Under whose wings thou art come to rest." The soul's wings are folded now, but some day they will be fitted for flight. They are wounded and bleeding now, but not always will they be so. I hear the rustle of wings in Robert Seagrave's hymn beginning

Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings.

I hear the rustle of wings in Alexander Pope's poem in which he makes the dying Christian say,

I mount, I fly,
Oh grave, where is thy victory!

I heard of a dying Christian not long ago who cried out, "Wings, wings, wings!" The air is full of them coming and going. You have seen the dull heavy chrysalis become the beautiful butterfly. In this world the soul is in the chrysalis state. But death will disclose and unfurl our wings. Oh, what a delight it will be to drop the fetters of the body, and mount the heavens, neither seagull circling over the rocks near the shore nor eagle soaring from the highest point of the Rockies being half so buoyant nor so majestic of stroke! Now tell me, if death is so blessed a transition as that, why do we sit and shiver at the thought of it, wishing we could stay here forever, preferring lame feet to swift wings? O people of God, let us stop playing the unbeliever and the coward, and let us make ready for rapturous flight!

Mary Russell Mitford, in her *Recollections of a Literary Life,* tells of her reflections when she was obliged to remove from a house where she long had lived, to another. She says:

I walked from the one cottage to the other on an autumnal evening, when the vagrant birds, whose habit of assembling here for their annual departure gives, I suppose, its name of Swallowfield to the village, were circling and twittering over my head; and repeated to myself the pathetic lines of Hayley when he saw those same birds gathering upon his roof during his last illness:

"Ye gentle birds, that perch aloof,
And smooth your pinions on my roof,
Preparing for departure hence,
The winter's angry threats commence;
Like you my soul would smooth her plume
For longer flights beyond the tomb.

"May God, by whom is seen and heard
Departing men and wandering bird,
In mercy mark us for his own
And guide us to the land unknown."

II

THE MESSAGE OF THE TREES

All the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
—Isaiah 55: 12.

THE MESSAGE OF THE TREES

THE Jews hardly could be called a poetic people. In all ages and everywhere they have been intensely practical. But they have been instinctively and superlatively reverent, and their reverence often impelled them to poetic speech. We do not find them going into raptures over the beauties of nature. There is no artistic painting in the Bible just for art's sake, and there is no drawing of word pictures just for the sake of the pictures. The Hebrew poet never said, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." Such a statement belongs to a Keats or a Shelley or a Swinburne, or some other member of that group of men who have a highly developed esthetic sense but no marked spiritual insight. Our poets never weary of talking about the splendor of the grass or the glory of the flowers. I have no doubt that the Hebrew poet perceived the beauty of these things, but he saw something better still. Natural things were to him but images of

spiritual things. All nature was instinct with God to him. He could find not only

> Tongues in trees, books in running brooks,
> Sermons in stones and good in everything,

but he could find God in everything. The thunder was God's voice to him. The lightning was the flash of God's eye. The sunshine was his smile. The heavens told of God's glory, and the earth was a specimen of his handiwork. If you would " speak to the earth, it would tell thee." Mr. Ruskin says that a Christian should have that sort of a mind today. He says that it ought not be possible for a Christian

> to walk over so much as a rood of the natural earth without receiving strength and hope from some stone or flower, or leaf or sound, nor without a sense of a divine dew falling upon him out of the sky.

Even the commonest things about us have a divine message for us if we have the ears to hear it. We do not get the message because we lack perception. We are told when they were first mining gold in Brazil they threw away the pebbles as useless, but afterward they discovered that many of the pebbles were diamonds. It is true everywhere that

if we would but be more observant of common things our lives would be immensely richer and fuller. The mass of people saw only the swinging lamp in the Pisa cathedral, but Galileo saw disclosed in it the law of the pendulum. The sailors saw only a bit of seaweed floating by his ship; Columbus found in it the assurance that a new world was near. The unthinking laughed when they noticed that a frog's legs twitched when put into contact with certain metals, but from what Galvani discerned in that we have the electric telegraph today.

The greatest men among us are the men who have the power to see things which are directly under the eyes of everybody, but which nobody else sees. How usual it is for men to keep their eyes shut is shown in our proverb about the man who goes through a forest and sees no fire-wood. Old Dr. Samuel Johnson once said to a gentleman who had just returned from a tour in Italy, "Some men will learn more in the Hempstead stage than others will in a tour of Europe." It is worth more than a million a year to be able to look into things that bring no suggestion to others and find in them

light and comfort coming to us straight from the throne of God. Really, if a man's mind is what it ought to be,

> Earth's crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God.

Oh, may God make us able to detect his presence everywhere as the Hebrew prophets could!

To the ancient Jew no object in nature suggested a greater variety of helpful thoughts than the trees. If the mountains were eloquent to him of the greatness and the permanence of God's grace, if the sea told him of God's untrammeled powers, the trees he found vocal with God's praises. "The trees of the field shall clap their hands before the Lord," he said. The mountains filled him with awe. The sea filled him with a sense of mystery. But the trees with scarcely an exception filled him with delight. Very many and beautiful are the truths which the figure of the tree enabled him to set forth. When he wishes to describe the security and the serenity of a man's own home he says, "He sits under his own vine and fig tree." When he wishes to picture

the beauty of a good man's life he says: "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. His leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." When he would declare how pleasant and helpful good words are he says, "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life." When he was thinking of the beauty of the white hair of the aged he remembered that the blossom of the almond tree is white, and says, "The almond tree shall flourish." When he would describe the superlative beauty of Jesus Christ he says, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved." When he would speak of the majestic bearing of the church he says, "Thy stature is like to a palm tree." When Christ would give us a test by which we can judge people righteously he said: "By their fruits ye shall know them. A good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and a corrupt tree evil fruit." When he would show us the inevitable punishment of a false profession he blasts the barren fig tree so that it speedily withers away. When he would illustrate the tremendous power of faith he says, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye

might say to this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the roots, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you." If John the Baptist would tell us that judgment is impending he says, "The axe is laid at the root of the tree." When the glory of the millennial day is to be pictured we are told, "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." When the happiness of the earth on account of the Lord's coming is to be described the prophet says, "All the trees of the field shall clap their hands." When the unspeakable blessedness of the final state of the Christian is to be set forth he says, "To him will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

Most of us belong to what has been called "the tree-loving fraternity." Indeed so universal is the love of trees that Christopher North once said, "The man who loves not trees—to look at them, to lie under them, to climb up them once more as a schoolboy—would make no bones of murdering Mrs. Jeff." And that great child of nature, Henry Ward Beecher, was so in love with

the trees that he said his heart warmed at the sight of even a board or a log, and a lumber-yard was better than nothing, for the smell of wood at least was there, the savory smell of resin, as sweet as myrrh and frankincense ever was to a Jew, and if he could get nothing better he loved to read over the names of trees in a catalogue. Many a night when he needed to be quieted he read nurserymen's catalogues until the smell of the woods exhaled from the pages and the sound of the leaves was in his ears. The beauty of the trees has been so impressive that men have sung some of the sweetest songs about them. None of these has been more instinct with love than that of Joyce Kilmer whom the great war took from us:

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
That intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

Sometimes the unbounded affection that men have felt for trees has come from their intimate association with certain of life's deep experiences. George P. Morris's simple song, so familiar to our childhood, in which he celebrates a tree dear to his early life finds a response in every heart:

Woodman, spare that tree,
Touch not a single bough;
In youth it sheltered me,
And I'll protect it now.
'Twas my forefather's hand
That placed it near his cot;
There, woodman, let it stand;
The axe shall harm it not.

My heartstrings round thee cling,
Close as thy bark, old friend;
Here shall the wild bird sing,
And still thy branches bend.
Old tree! the storm still brave!
And woodman, leave the spot.
While I've a hand to save,
The axe shall harm it not.

And Lady Nairne, in different dialect, yet speaking the same language of the heart, sings of a tree, associated with her father's and mother's devotions and so unspeakably dear to her:

Oh, Rowan tree! Oh, Rowan tree! thou'lt aye be dear to me,
Intwined thou art wi' mony ties o' hame and infancy.

On thy fair stem were mony names, which now nae mair I see;
But they're engraven on my heart, forgot they ne'er can be.

Oh, there arose my father's prayer, in holy evening's calm,
How sweet was then my mother's voice, in the Martyr's psalm;
Now a' are gane! we meet nae mair aneath the Rowan tree,
But hallowed thoughts around thee twine o' hame and infancy,
Oh, Rowan tree!

At times men's affection for trees has deepened into veneration. Beecher said:

Does a man bare his head in some old church? So did I, standing in the shadow of this regal tree, and looking into its completed glory, at which three hundred years have been at work with noiseless fingers. What was I in its presence but a grasshopper!

Our Saxon forefathers worshiped under a sacred tree in which they believed God dwelt, and when the great missionary Boniface put the axe to the tree and dealt the blows that felled it, they expected the bolts of their god's wrath to break out against him. And when it did not, they took his God for theirs. So that we may say that the fall of a tree caused the Saxon conversion to Christianity.

Christian appreciation of God's handiwork in the trees is expressed by copying their form in our architecture. Gothic architecture, the consummate flower of the builder's art, is simply a copy of the arching limbs of great trees. And it is not an overstrain of the imagination to say that the gorgeous stained-glass window of the cathedral was suggested by the colors of the sunset glowing among the branches of the trees. All of which means that men found that the woods so beget reverence that they made their temples like them. We long have said that the woods were man's first temples, and we may add that when men came to build houses of worship they made them like the woods. Longfellow says of the forest that nature with folded hands seems kneeling there in

prayer. And saying that he has but caught the meaning that God had in the planting of the forests. For God said, "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the fir tree, and the pine and the box tree together, that they may see and know and consider and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it."

As the trees are the work of God's hands they will tell us something about God's character if we have but the ears that can hear it. To start with, *what suggestions the trees have to make to us about the plenitude of God's grace, the abundance of his mercies!* Men work economically, sometimes of necessity, and sometimes out of niggardly spirit. It is characteristic of God to open his hand wide and give lavishly. What infinite variety there is among the trees, and how widely the seeds of them are scattered. If you give nature any opportunity at all, she will give you a tree. God has filled the earth with the seeds that are simply waiting a chance to grow. A shovel full of earth may have hundreds of them. Cut down or burn down a forest, and trees of a different sort spring

up to replace those that were destroyed. The seeds were there in the soil waiting for their chance. If you have driven much about the country, with farmers for your companions, you have listened with wonder to their stories of forests destroyed, that were succeeded by trees of another sort. The soil was full of seeds that were waiting their chance to spring up. No matter where you go the wide world over you will find that the Creator has been there before you strewing his seeds of trees. Go to the Himalayas, twelve thousand feet, more than two miles, above tidewater, and there you will find the deodar, "the tree of the gods," compared with which the cedars of Lebanon are but pigmies. They stand 150 feet in height, rising 70 feet before they send out a branch, and of immense girth. Out on the desert, amid immeasurable stretches of sterile sand you will find the stately palm waving beside the spring. God has strewn his seed there too. Flood the Sahara, and it would blossom like a garden of the Lord. In the most impossible places, in crowded parts of a great city, where men are packed as corpses in a cemetery, between the bricks you will

find a green shoot trying to spring into being. God has put his seed even there. The clouds seem to drop vegetation wherever they wander, and every stray wind seems laden with life.

Under the tuition of the Saviour it is easy to argue that he who has satisfied man's eyes with the widely strewn verdure of the trees, and has given our bodies their abundant fruits, will provide for the needs of our souls also with at least equal liberality. How could any one ever have believed that God's grace is stinted? "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Just as when the Saviour fed the 5,000 in the wilderness he did not create just sufficient food but had enough left over to fill twelve baskets, so with wide-open hands God showers bounties upon men with a liberality that outstrips our wildest thoughts. Paul says, "God is able to make *all* grace abound toward you, that ye, in *all* times, having *all* sufficiency in *all* things, may abound unto *all* good works."

The trees have also an eloquent message for us about *God's power*. If you are seek-

ing the greatest exhibition of power in the world, do not go to some great battlefield with its big guns that hurl their shells seventy miles. Do not go to some factory where is a giant Corliss engine driving acres of wheels, and making the whole block vibrate as with life. Those places show you the best that man can do. But go to some forest. There is no hum or clatter of wheels, no bang or roar of cannon. But there is power indeed. There is vastly more power exerted in the forests of the world than in all the factories of the world. Think how the sap is forced up from the roots to the topmost twig. No one can estimate the force exerted in it. It has been said that the force expended in a single tree in a season is greater than the power exerted in the discharge of a great cannon. Think of the power exerted then, in all the forests of the world.

All this is done with so little ostentation that men do not think of it. It is done by very humble means. The leaves that every breath of a breeze sets in a flutter are the seat of the trees' power largely. Every leaf is hard at work. It is making its contribution of fiber which is sent down through the twig,

through the branch, down through the trunk, down through the roots themselves to the very tips. And so it comes to pass that the millions of trees of the far-stretching forests of the world, are but the result of the toil of the leaves of the trees as year by year they have come and gone.

You are familiar with the great redwood trees of California. They are the greatest trees in the world. The greatest of them all, called the "father of the forest," as it lay on the ground where it fell, measured at its base 112 feet around, and towered in the air some 450 feet. Its trunk was hollowed out by fire, and you could walk through the charred trunk for about two hundred feet with your hat on, and then come out through a knot-hole. One of these trees, which was cut down years ago, it took six weeks to fell, and they made its stump into the floor of a ballroom. The giant which was known as "Old Moses," I suppose because it had begun to live in Moses' time, was estimated to be over four thousand years old, and when it was hollowed out it held one hundred and fifty persons, and was hung with painted scenes of California, and was carpeted and

furnished like a drawing-room, with tables, chairs, sofa, and piano. Great trees they are. Some one has facetiously said that it takes two men and a boy to see to the top of them. Gladstone used to tell gleefully of two men who were chopping away for weeks on opposite sides of one of them, neither of them knowing that any one else was in the forest until they met at the heart of the tree. But apart from any jests, the trees are so great that when the discoverer, who was hunting bear, came out of the forest in 1852 and told what he had found, men would not believe him. These trees have lived for ages. Many of them are older than England. Their wood is almost as hard as rock. And yet that immense bulk of ironlike wood is the product of the leaves' toil. It is difficult to believe that those huge trunks that have borne the brunt of the storms of thousands of years, were built up by the fragile leaves; that the enduring timber of which our shipping, our houses, and our furniture, have been made, was formed by the leaves that we tread under foot and which a baby's hand could tear to pieces; that the vast fields of coal on which we depend for

our comfort and through the long winters for our very life, were made by leaves. I do not know where you can find another illustration that so wonderfully demonstrates that God uses the weak things of this world to confound the mighty. Every leaf waving in the summer air ought to be vocal with suggestions to us about the power of God made manifest through weakness. However weak and powerless we may feel ourselves to be, I do not see how we ever can be despondent again, when we can see that through such weak things as the leaves, God can make the towering pine, or the giant oak, or the incomparable redwood.

The supreme message of the trees is what Christ was always teaching from all nature about us, *that God will surely take care of us.* His power has made the trees the source of refreshment and comfort for us. They give us food. They give us medicine. They give us fuel. They give us a sheltering roof. They yield satisfaction to such diversified necessities that so far as this world is concerned the trees always seem to be saying to us, " My God shall supply all your need."

What we call pure air, that is, air with a

certain proportion of oxygen, is a necessity of life to us. Every animal that breathes draws on this supply of oxygen. Now the trees take the air, polluted by our use of it, and give it back to us refilled with oxygen. It is estimated that there are suspended in the atmosphere over every square mile of the earth's surface 13,750 tons of carbonic acid gas. This gas is the fire-damp of wells. It is the lurking danger of coal-mines. It means death to you and me. And we are adding to its volume every time we breathe. We inhale oxygen and exhale carbonic acid gas. Every chimney sends it out in a torrent. Every gas-jet or burning lamp creates it. Every piece of decaying matter exhales it. Very soon our earth would be wrapped about with it so thickly that all of us would be smothered but for one thing, and that is what the leaves are doing on all the trees. They take up these impurities from the air, replace them with oxygen, and send the air out to us again sweet and pure and life-supporting. And so every tree that we pass by the roadside is an example to us of the beneficent ministry God would have us render to men. In more senses than one

God's people are like trees planted by rivers of water. They too are meant to make things about them sweeter and purer. Because they are about, things that are right and noble ought to have a better chance to succeed. By the power of God in them Christian people ought to be able to change the carbonic acid gas of evil influence into the oxygen of holy influence.

Water also is a necessity of life to us. We need no argument to prove that the moon is uninhabited when we know that it is waterless. And to the trees we owe the water we have to drink, and all the vegetation in the spreading fields that the water nourishes. The clouds, if they existed at all, would serve us very doubtfully except for the trees. The springs of water in the valley could not exist but for the trees. The brooks that dash so merrily down the mountainside would disappear but for the trees. The lake that nestles among the hills would dry up but for the trees. The river flowing so majestically toward the sea could not continue to flow but for the trees. Just as soon as the forests are cut down, the springs dry up, the clouds do not ascend, the rivers cease

to flow. It is the forest that makes all the difference there is between the desert of Sahara and the Garden of Eden, between the barren moon and the beautiful earth. Take trees out of the world and the whole earth would soon be a dead desert.

Some years ago our New York State Legislature passed laws to protect the Adirondack forests. Probably most of the politicians did not care for the forests. Indeed some of them were coveting the timber there. But it was demonstrated to them that it was necessary to protect those woods that we might preserve the water supply of our lakes and rivers. Think of the Hudson River. It is one of the noblest and most beautiful rivers of the world. On its broad waters the navies of the world might float. People from all over the world admire its majestic flow, its sentinel headlands, and the beauty of its highlands. But you know that but for the brooks and tiny streams and the springs in the hills farther up we could have no noble Hudson flowing to the sea, and no thriving cities along its shores. The magnificent harbor of New York would be there, but we should have no city of New York occupying

Manhattan Island as a queen sits on her throne, with her skirts covering the territory beyond, and receiving her tribute from the ends of the earth. For all this region would be desert, and desert lands need no harbor to accommodate their commerce. All the things that make up our life are entirely dependent on the little springs that are hidden away on wooded hillsides, and on the little streams that trickle their way through secluded valleys, and these are nourished and preserved by the trees. Better carefully supervise the axes in the Adirondacks and in all our forests. It would have been better for China if the axes had been checked in their devastating work ages ago. And if the axes go on unchecked in our land much longer, we shall have here the bare hills of China, and the disordered seasons, and the droughts, and the floods, and the unmanageable rivers when the rains do come.

And the very same shade of the trees that prevents the springs being dried up, rests and refreshes us when we are scorched by the sun's beams. A grove of trees is like a sanctuary, as a refuge to the traveler across the desert. We can understand what he

means when he says, that he sits down under its shadow with great delight. So the wise king of old said that he was refreshed by God's presence. So it is suggested that in the exercise of a gracious personal presence we should be casting helpful, protecting influences about our fellow men that the springs of their hope and courage may not dwindle or be wholly dried up in the hot turmoil of this life.

There have been trees of immense importance in the history of nations. In old England there was a tree in whose hollow a king hid when he was pursued by his enemies. In New England, in the city of Hartford, there was a tree, the Charter Oak, in which was hidden the colonial charter when its surrender was demanded by Governor Andros. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, was an elm famed far and wide because under it George Washington took command of the American army in 1775. In the northeastern part of Philadelphia was an elm equally famous because under it William Penn made that treaty with the Indians which was the guaranty of peace for so many years.

But these trees, famed the world over, are

as nothing compared with those trees that commemorate crises in the spiritual history of our race. Trees are associated indissolubly with man's fall and redemption. Eating of the forbidden tree in the garden, our first parents fell and brought sin into the world and all our woe. It was under the great trees in the garden of Gethsemane that our Saviour was praying when he sweat great drops of blood for us. Of those trees Sidney Lanier sang his touching "Ballad of the Trees":

Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forespent, forespent.
Into the woods my Master came,
Forespent with love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to him,
The little gray leaves were kind to him,
The thorn tree had a mind to him,
When into the woods he came.

Out of the woods my Master went,
And he was well content.
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.
When death and shame would woo him last,
From under the trees they drew him last;
'Twas on a tree they slew him—last;
When out of the woods he came.

Peter says that "they took him, and with wicked hands slew him and hanged him on a tree." That is the greatest tree of all time, that yields the full antidote for the sorrows which came from the primal, fatal tree.

There are some who account that tree on which the Saviour hung accursed. One of our hymns says,

> Bound upon the accursed tree,
> Faint and bleeding, who is he?

Christian legend says that that tree was an aspen, and that no grass will grow near where it stands, and that because of its part in the great tragedy, its leaves are condemned to tremble until the day of doom.

> Ah, tremble, tremble, aspen tree!
> We need not ask thee why thou shakest;
> For if, as holy legend saith,
> On thee the Saviour bled to death,
> No wonder, aspen, that thou quakest,
> And till in judgment all assemble
> Thy leaves accursed shall wail and tremble.

But if that tree is accursed it simply shares the curse of Him who hung upon it. It is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." And out of his curse, and its curse if it shares it with him, have come un-

measured and eternal blessings to a world that was lost in sin.

And at last, when our salvation is made complete by our being received into heaven, we shall have free access to the tree of life, that yields its fruit every month, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. So that trees not only have messages of comfort and refreshment in the things of this life, but are associated with our spiritual fall in Eden, with our atonement in Gethsemane and on Calvary, and with our bliss in heaven.

III

THE MESSAGE OF THE FLOWERS

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.
—Matthew 6: 28.

THE MESSAGE OF THE FLOWERS

In his fascinating book, *Here, There, and Everywhere,* Frederick Hamilton speaks of the beauty of the island of Ceylon. He says that many think it the most beautiful island in the world, and then he adds, "But they have not seen Jamaica." I have seen both. But that does not make it easier to pronounce judgment. If I had seen only one of the two I should have been sure that nothing elsewhere could equal it in beauty. Having seen both I cannot be positive in favor of either. Having seen both I am in the position of the Pennsylvania Dutch judge. He was sitting on the bench hearing a case. The prosecution presented its side of the case. It all seemed very clear to the judge. He could have made a decision at once. But when the defense presented its side he held up his hands helplessly and exclaimed, "Ach, zhentlemens, when you presents two sides you confuses me." It is impossible to decide which of these two claimants for a decision as to superior beauty is entitled to it. Both

of them are veritable paradises. Both of them are like a garden of the Lord. Both of them are everywhere abloom with beauty. It is doubtful whether Eden, fresh from God's hand, could have surpassed either of them. And the superlative beauty of these islands is due to the tropical luxuriance of their vegetation. Flowering trees and plants are everywhere, so that you wonder as much at the variety of them as at their beauty.

And yet I do not know that they very much surpass the beauty of the north in the springtime. Several times in recent years I have been obliged to take a journey a thousand miles long in the springtime. The journey was a gorgeous panorama of beauty. The mountainsides were pink and fragrant with laurel. The fields were alternately white and yellow and blue with buttercups and violets and daisies. The gardens were aflame with all the beauty of the rose, every bush bearing testimony to the presence and power of God just as surely as that acacia bush upon which Moses looked out there in the wilderness. And I have thought that if with David we look up at the skies and see the glory of God written there over our

heads, we may with equal reason look down at the earth and see the glory of God strewn beneath our feet. And we have the Saviour's warrant for doing so. Seated there on the hillside, preaching the greatest sermon ever heard and filling the souls of the multitude with awe while he spake as never man spake, he looked about and saw some lilies growing wild in the fields, and he gave them a tongue that they might bear perpetual witness to the power and love of God.

The Lord Jesus not only saw things but he saw into things. One man sees a flower, and it makes no suggestion to him.

> A primrose by the river's brim,
> A yellow primrose is to him,
> And it is nothing more.

Another man looks upon a flower and it is so vocal of God's goodness that all his life is different because he has seen it. The poet Wordsworth made a journey with his sister on the lake of Ullswater in the beautiful lake country of England. All along the margin of the lake for a long distance he noticed how it was fringed and luminous with golden daffodils. He said:

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the Milky Way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of the bay.
Ten thousand saw I at a glance
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee;
A poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company;
I gazed and gazed, but little thought
What wealth to me the show had brought.

For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills
And dances with the daffodils.

You see that to Wordsworth the flowers were something immensely more than long stretches of yellow upon the margin of the lake. They were treasuries of peace and joy which long afterward he drew upon. The world was brighter and life was richer and God was nearer, because he had seen the armies of the daffodils marshaling their ranks along the blue margin of the waves. The same Wordsworth also said,

To me the meanest flower that blows
Gives thoughts that often lie too deep for tears.

Now if you look into the Bible you will be surprised at how much it has to say of flowers. Page after page can be taken up with a simple list of the flowers it mentions, from the hyssop that grows on the wall to the cedar that waves on Lebanon. And every blossom is freighted with suggestion as well as with fragrance. Job uses flowers to teach the brevity of human life. He says, "Man cometh up, and is cut down like a flower." The psalmist takes the same lesson: "As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. The wind passeth over it and it is gone," he says. Isaiah says, "All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof is as a flower of the field." And the apostle James says again, "As a flower of the grass so he passeth away." What vivid symbolism that is! Christ uses the flowers to demonstrate God's care. He says: "See the flowers of the field. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them, and the God who takes care of them will surely take care of you." And Solomon, as though by anticipation of Christ's words, uses the flowers to set

forth the beauty of Christ, making him say, "I am the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley."

The lily is the chief flower of the Bible. The rose is the queen of flowers among us. But the rose nineteen hundred years ago was not what it is today. It was the simple wild flower of five petals. Now florists have nourished the rose into luxuriance. Anciently the lily stood foremost among the flowers in beauty. In the time of Solomon and Esther and of Christ it was the synonym of grace and loveliness. And so we find that the Bible mentions the lily fourteen times. Only twice it mentions the rose. Cæsar had his throne upon the hills. The lily was the acknowledged queen of the valleys. I suppose, however, Christ used the lily as representative of all flowers, and if we get into the spirit of the precept we shall feel that we are obeying it when we consider the violet, or the geranium, or the rose, or the tulip, or the hyacinth, or the azalea, or the heliotrope, or the ivy, or the arbutus, and with grateful hearts worship the Maker of them all.

In New Testament times Christ is represented as stooping down and writing on the

ground, and they marveled at it. Christ is still doing that very thing, and in the verdure of the mountains and the valley, in the springtime flowers and the sweet shrubs, Christ the Lord is still stooping down and writing on the ground lessons for us to study.

I have heard of a mother who when it thundered said to her child, "My dear, that is God's voice." When some radiant day in June comes why not have the mother say of the sunshine, "My dear, that is God's smile"? And when the odor of all the flowers makes the air heavy with fragrance why not have the mother say, "My dear, that is the sweetness of God's breath"? That is what the text seems to impel us to do. We may study other science and philosophies or not, just as we wish. We can study physiology with David and say, "I will praise thee, O God, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." We can study astronomy with Kepler and say, "I think thy thoughts after thee, O God." We can study jurisprudence with Moses and Blackstone and find the law a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. But it is better far to study botany with Christ,

considering the lilies of the field as they grow, and hearing the message they have to give us. For God has made all nature vocal with his truth if we have but the ears to hear it. When the clouds speak, they thunder. When the winds speak, they sigh or scream. When the cataracts speak, they roar. All these speak of God's power. But when the flowers speak they whisper. They tell of God's love, and the text spoken by our Saviour is sent to us as the interpreter of their message. At the touch of that sympathetic interpretation we are impelled to say as Horace Smith wrote:

Your voiceless lips, O flowers, are living preachers;
  Each cup a pulpit, and each leaf a book,
Supplying to my fancy numerous teachers
    In loneliest nook.

In the scented pictures, heavenly Artist,
  With which thou paintest nature's wide-spread hall,
What a delightful lesson Thou impartest
    Of love to all.

Were I, O God, in churchless lands remaining,
  Far from the voice of teachers and divines,
My soul would find in flowers of thine ordaining,
    Preachers, Sermons, Shrines.

One of the first things the flowers do as we contemplate them is *to fill us with astonishment at God's skill.* God seems to have wrapped up in the flowers all the secrets of his being. Galileo, in prison for his advanced notions of things, was asked why he persisted in believing in God, and he pointed to a bit of broken straw lying on the floor of his dungeon and he said, " Sirs, if I had no other reason to believe in the wisdom and the goodness of God, I could find abundant reason in the straw you see there." So Tennyson said that there was wrapped up in any smallest flower all the truth of God that was revealed, and that is still to be revealed. He says:

> Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pull you out of the crannies,
> Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower—but if I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is.

All the artists and artisans and philosophers of earth have not the power to make a single dandelion such as you trample under foot. There is enough wine of wisdom in one cup of china aster for all the nations to drink of

it. There is enough to baffle all the architects in the structure of one pond-lily. There is enough to baffle all the chemists in the sap of one flower stalk. All the universities of the world cannot explain the wonders of one lily bulb; nor declare to you the untraveled continents of mystery in one drop of dew lying in the bosom of a flower to refresh it; nor can they solve the mysteries of one sunflower seed; nor can they match in anything they make the gorgeous upholstery of one tuft of mountain moss or the triumphal arch of one tree branch. The painters of the world never can cease to wonder where is the vat from which God dips the crimson and the gold, the saffron and the blue, the green and the red with which he adorns his flowers. The first thing, then, that the flowers do for us, is to fill us with awe at God's skill.

The flowers fill us with delight also at the beauty of God's handiwork. They are a revelation of God's own delight in beauty. They suggest that God has no sympathy with the notion of the Puritans that beauty was largely a thing of the world and the flesh and the devil. I very rarely say any-

thing against the Puritans. Puritanism made out of our poor humanity the noblest manhood and womanhood that this world of ours ever has seen. In such an age as this it ill becomes us to join in the too common sneer against it. Our deepest need today is something more of its stern rectitude, its brave piety, and heroic endurance as seeing him who is invisible. But right as Puritanism was in most directions, it was wrong in its opposition to what was simply beautiful. Here it was not for God but against him. Any violet nestling in the grass might have told them that. The blue of the sky might have told them that. The rainbow's arch, the sunset's glow, the shimmering aurora might have told them that. The musical voice of innocent childhood might have told them that. There is no religion in barrenness and plainness. A church service and a church building are not made more acceptable to God by poverty of adornment. A home is not made more religious by severe plainness. So long as works of mercy and charity are not neglected, I believe that God smiles approval on us when we adorn his house.

Mr. Beecher told us that in his early ministry in the West he was sometimes in doubt where to put up when he was on a journey. Such hotels as there were then were called houses of entertainment. He usually preferred the barn to the hotel. But he used to watch for a window that had flowers in it. For, he said, that always back of the flowers in the window was a woman that loved the flowers enough to take care of them. And when he found a woman that loved flowers he found a woman who had a natural element of refinement in her. The flower was not merely a flower to him, it was the sign of a person who had a certain kind of disposition.

I heard some time ago of a woman who when she went to church always devoutly wore her best robe and her richest jewels. If you did not know her thought about it, it might seem to you a violation of good taste. But this woman was thoroughly devout in her personal adornment. She said that just as when she was to meet a dear friend she wished out of respect to her friend to be so robed as to enhance her beauty, so when she went to God's house to meet him she took

delight in preparing herself very carefully to meet him. The Bible does not say very much about personal beauty, it is true. But it does not ignore it. It does not put a veil over a beautiful face as they do in the East so that no one may see it. It takes pleasure in suggesting that Sarah and Rachel were fair to look upon, and that Joseph and David and Daniel were of beautiful countenance. And I can easily understand this woman who devoutly sought to enhance her natural beauty by arraying herself in her best when she went to meet God in his house. That is vastly better than being careless about one's appearance when going to worship on the ground that God does not care how we look. He does care. He appreciates our preparing ourselves to meet him. He has filled the world with beauty, and that is a sign that he delights in it. He is pleased when we use the beauty he has put into the world to enhance our own. He likes to see the flowers used to add to the beauty of the bride. Flowers are good for the wedding-day. Flowers on the bride's brow, and in her hand, and in bowers over the couple as they stand plighting their troth. God likes to see flowers in

his house, in the pulpit preaching a better sermon about his goodness than any preacher can. He likes to see them placed here as memorials of those who are gone, showing that their dear ones remember them and expect to meet them again. He likes to see them in the home, filling the children's minds with thoughts of beauty and their lives with gracious deeds. He likes to see them about the dead, covering up the ghastliness of bereavement and suggesting the coming resurrection. You remember how beautifully Longfellow said of the flowers:

Everywhere about us they are glowing,
Some like stars to tell us spring is born;
Others, their blue eyes with tears o'erflowing
Stand like Ruth amid the golden corn.

In all places, then, and in all seasons,
Flowers expand their light and soul-like wings,
Teaching us by most persuasive reasons,
How akin they are to human things.

And with childlike, credulous affection
We behold their tender buds expand;
Emblems of our own great resurrection,
Emblems of the bright and better land.

God set his own Son's sepulchre in the midst of a garden; and I wish that every sepulchre

might be so placed that the flowers' promise of a resurrection might be written in the very place where our dear ones' bodies lie.

I have already suggested that *the flowers inspire us to trust in God's care.* This is the great lesson the Saviour makes them teach us. He makes them say: "Look at us. We have no wheel with which to spin. We have no loom with which to weave. We have no sickle with which to harvest. We have no well from which to draw water. And so we stand where God has put us and wait, and he slakes our thirst with his dew, and prepares our food in the soil, and stimulates us by his sunshine, and clothes us with more than Solomonic glory. Wherefore if God so clothes us, will he not much more clothe you, his children?" That is the message of the flowers. O men and women, overwhelmed with anxieties, take this message home with you. God will take care of you. How long has he taken care of you? Quarter of the journey of life? Half the journey of life? Three-quarters of the journey of life? Cannot you trust him the rest of the way? God does not promise you extravagances such as the Roman emperors had on their tables. One

of them had five hundred nightingales' tongues for a single meal. But God will give you necessities if not luxuries. If God so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you his immortal children? He will. I do not wonder that Martin Luther liked to have a flower on his writing-table for the inspiration it gave him. I do not wonder that Picciola was greatly cheered by a flower that grew up through the crack in his prison floor. I do not wonder that Doctor Kane in the far North wept like a child when he found a little Alpine flower. I do not wonder that a flower was able by its sweet suggestions to save the life of Mungo Park, the great explorer. He sank down in the desert to die, but seeing a flower near-by, he was assured of God's merciful care, and he got up with new courage and traveled on to safety. It is told of Mohammed that when the political economists of the day provoked him by the narrowness of their utilitarian schemes, he was wont to silence them with these words: "If a man has two loaves of bread, let him exchange one for some flowers of the narcissus; for bread nourishes only the body, but to look

on the narcissus feeds the soul." And Edmund Gosse says of Robert Herrick, the seventeenth-century poet, that he was one of the few who have been content to walk through life with a little bread in one hand, and in the other a bunch of golden flowers.

And as a last word let me say that the beauty and fragrance of the flowers are intended to be to us *a foretaste of what God has in reserve for us by and by.* The flowers are bits of heaven let down to earth. They fade here and lose their sweetness that they may teach us to long for that land where beauty is eternal and sweet odors are perpetual. If this world blasted with sin and swept by storms is still so beautiful, what must be the beauty of that sinless world toward which we travel. And yet we stand here shivering and fearing to go to the other world, and we prefer to stay in a world which compared with the world to come is nothing but a desert. We prefer to stay in a world which with all its beauty is but a Dry Tortugas, when we are invited to arbors of jessamine and birds of paradise. Some time ago I made a trip to our tropical seas. We left New York in the cold of January

and sailed to the regions of perpetual summer. Then we left summer behind and came back to the February cold. I tell you the journey out was very different from the journey back. As you go south barrenness is left behind, the foliage becomes thick and beautiful. As you come north the verdure grows scantier and scantier until there is none at all. It all depends upon the direction in which you travel. If a spirit from heaven is sent on an errand to this world, he is traveling from June toward December, from radiance toward darkness, from hanging gardens toward icebergs; and I would not be surprised if he came reluctantly and was slow in coming. But how strange it is that we dread going from December to June, from earthly storm and chill to the beauty of Eden, from the Arctics of trouble to the tropics of eternal joy. What an ado we make about dying! We get so attached to this old malarial marsh in which we live that we are afraid to go up and dwell on the hilltop in God's pure, serene air. I am amazed at myself and at you.

> Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
> Stand dressed in living green.

Why should we be afraid to go?

There everlasting spring abides
And never with'ring flowers.
Death like a narrow stream divides
That heavenly land from ours.

Why should we fear the transition?

IV

THE MESSAGE OF THE SUN

The Lord God is a sun.—Psalm 84: 11.

THE MESSAGE OF THE SUN

I CAN remember with what wonder as a child I listened to my father and mother talking about the "sun crossing the line." It seemed to be a great event. And there was always such an accent of cheerfulness in father's voice as he said it, that it made me more cheerful though I did not know just what was meant by the sun crossing the line. But it means wonderful things to our northern zones. The short days of winter are gone. The sun gets up earlier in the morning, and stays with us longer in the evening, so that the days and nights are equal, and the days are going to be longer still. It means that all nature that has been lying dead for five or six months will soon have a marvelous resurrection. The bare hills will be carpeted with a green that none of man's mills can duplicate. The fields will be covered with the white silk brocade and the cloth of gold that are made of buttercups and daisies. The orchards will bloom, and fill the neighborhood with fragrance, and

then will be laden with such fruit as will gladden the eyes and rejoice the heart of man. The poor will no more have to watch with anxiety the diminishing coal in the pail, and draw their clothes about them in the vain effort to keep warm. Invalids who have been shut up indoors during the winter will come out again into the fresh air without fear of any chill. And in all sorts and conditions of men there will spring up new hopes as they go about bathed in God's sunshine. The coming back of the sun's power means to countless millions of people beneficent changes that are nothing short of miraculous. In the northern regions where the nights last for months the return of the sun is hailed with greatest pleasure. Men climb any elevation there is at hand to get the first glimpse of it. To use Shakespeare's graphic line they stand " tiptoe on the misty mountaintops " to greet its coming. A little paper published by the crew of an arctic ship had a picture in it showing the sun just peeping above the southern horizon. In the foreground was a ship frozen in the ice, and near by was a party of sailors, gazing with intense eagerness on the returning sun and

throwing their caps into the air and dancing for joy.

If I had no knowledge of the true God, no form of worship would begin to attract me like the worship of the sun. There is nothing else in the universe, you know, that means to us what the sun means. I do not wonder that some men in every age have worshiped it, and that the Parsees still worship it. Sun-worship is the sublimest idolatry. It is idolatry, it is true, but it is so pure and so spiritual in its symbolism, that it seems to be pretty well on the way toward becoming acceptable, spiritual worship. I suppose that the creed of the sun-worshipers is as good as men could make without a revelation. In some of its thoughts it comes rather close to revelation. As a matter of fact, fire-worshipers, or sun-worshipers, have always been the best of the whole race of idolaters. And no doubt if we knew them well, we should find that some among them who say, "The sun is my God," are at least started on the way to saying as the spiritually-minded psalmist did, "God is a sun."

A visitor once ventured to ask Alfred Tennyson what he thought of Jesus Christ.

They were walking in a garden. The poet was silent for a moment. Then he stood still by a beautiful flower, and pointing to it said, " What the sun is to that flower, Jesus Christ is to my soul." So this ancient poet who wrote the text said. And with him it was no dry statement uttered without emotion. His whole soul was put into that verse. And he knew what he was talking about. He meant just what he said. He had studied the sky. As he watched his flocks on the Bethlehem plains, he studied the sky. Many and many a night he watched the spread-out splendor of the stars. And when the sun shot out its first rays above the horizon, he hailed it with gratitude. And when it came into full view, and turned chilliness into warmth and comfort, and converted gloom into brightness and gladness, he fell on his face as though God were there before him and said, " What the sun is to the earth, that God is to me, giving me life and comfort and good cheer and unfailing hope." The Lord God is the sun.

Ancient ways of thinking were very different from ours. In those days men saw God everywhere. They thought of a per-

sonal Creator of all things, and of a personal superintendence of nature's workings. We are abandoning the idea of creation, and nature is entirely impersonal to us. We say, "It rained"; they said, "He sent the rain." We say, "The winds blew"; they said, "He caused the winds to blow." While I would not like to say that men today see God nowhere, yet it is true that men have been trying to find explanations of things about us that would banish God from his own universe. They have said that if there is a God he does not show himself on earth. They seem to think that the universe made itself; or rather that the material of it always existed, and somehow it fashioned itself. They are quite sure that the universe runs itself. Men used to see the glory of God in the heavens. I am not sure that they do now. With a greatly increased knowledge of the numberless worlds that shine in the sky the heavens are more mysterious than ever, yet I am not sure that many men today are struck with reverence as they look up, as the psalmist was. Men used to see God's handiwork in the earth. But now many a geologist who studies how the earth

was made forgets that the forces he sees at work are simply the signs of God's activity. And there are of course, a great many people who never think of the earth except as something that can be bought and sold. The earth—how much is it worth to the acre? The earth—is there oil in it? The earth—what will its mines produce? The earth—how much is its timber worth? Men look upon the mountains as machines for making rain; they look upon the rain as a machine for making crops; they look upon the crops as a means of making money. The old Hebrew worshipers, walking forth, used to see God's majesty in the sun and moon and the stars. They used to see his mercy in the rain. They used to see his wrath in the lightning and the thunder. Kepler, the astronomer, was of the same spirit, for as he listened to the story that the stars had to tell him he said, "O God, I think thy thoughts after thee." And Alexander Winchell, geologist of the first rank, could see that no matter what the forces by which he did it, it was God's hand that packed the land together, tossing up the mountains to great heights, and thrusting down the floor of the

ocean to great depths. But it must be admitted that many who study these things have no spiritual sense, and they hunt God out of his own universe until he becomes nothing but a name.

What we need today more than anything else is to have God brought back into the midst of things. The best name for God, in the Bible, for an age like ours is "Immanuel." I should like to carve that name conspicuously over the entrance to every house of prayer. I would write it on the walls of every home—Immanuel. I would have it flashing from every wave of the sea, and read it in the testimony of the rocks, and see it on every field of waving grain—Immanuel. I can see it shining in the sunbeams by day and with hardly less brilliance in the rays of the stars at night—Immanuel! Immanuel!! What does that mean? Immanuel? God? Yes, but more. It is "*God with us.*" It is not God far off, as so many think of him. It is not, "God's in his heaven." It is God brought down; God within reach; God by our side. Oh, if we had but listening ears, and open eyes, there is nothing in the wide universe that would not

give us some new message about God. Every bird that flies through the air has some message from God to us. Every flower growing pure and fragrant out of foul soil can tell us something of his ways. Every passing breeze can whisper to us about the mysterious workings of his Spirit. And every sunbeam that strikes across your path can speak to you with such wondrous power that you will pause in your walking and say, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not."

I suppose that when the psalmist said, "The Lord God is a sun," he meant that *God is like the sun in the profusion of its shining.* Did you ever think how the sun squanders its light and heat? We have no word in the dictionary that begins to express its lavishness. Sometimes when we wish to express vastness of number we say, "Oh, it is like the sand of the seashore, or it is like the stars for multitude." Or we say eternity has as many years as there are drops of water in the ocean, as many years as there are leaves on all the trees of the earth, or blades of grass in all the fields. But all these are nothing compared with the flood of sunshine that drenches heaven and earth, that

penetrates the soil, that saturates rocks and stones with heat, and that has moved on in endless procession for uncounted years, and can move on for uncounted years to come. We have no more idea of the abundance of light and heat that the sun pours out than a midget floating in the sunshine has of the size of the earth. The sun is the great prodigal of the universe. It knows nothing about economy. It gives to everybody. It gives unstintedly. It shines before and behind, above and below, and all about. For one little blossom whole oceans of light come down. And there is just as much poured out on the bare, barren rock as there is for the windflower that grows by the side of the rock. There is so much that the whole earth gets only one two-billionth part of the light and heat that the sun pours out, and all the planets together get less than one two-hundred-millionth part of what is given out.

What the sun is to the material world, that God is to the world of the soul. Do not think that God's mercy can be measured by any standard that men are accustomed to, or that his goodness can be expressed by any system that we can devise.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

And though it is true, as any one can perceive, that the iniquity of the fathers is visited on the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate God, yet the mercy of the Lord extends to thousands of generations of them that love him and keep his commandments.

The sun represents God in being the center of all power. The sun is very far away from us, farther than any thought of ours can realize. If you should start counting, five to a second, three hundred to a minute, and that is fairly rapid counting—and count twelve hours every day without any cessation through the year, you would have counted only about 78,000,000. But the sun is 93,000,000 miles away. Yet though it is inconceivably far off, it is the great holding force of the universe. It holds and guides all the planets by invisible reins. It keeps the earth in its course. All the orbs about it acknowledge allegiance to it. Not one can wander out of the orbit that it prescribes.

So God is the center of power in the world's affairs. Whether they will or not, in the long run men work out God's purposes. He makes even the wrath of men to praise him. It is with every piece of wickedness even as it was with the execrable murder of Jesus Christ, about which Christ said to Pilate, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above." There are a great many men today who resent and repudiate God's authority over them. The denial of any such thing as authority is the conspicuous folly in men's thinking today. You will find that it marks classroom teaching. It is found in the pulpit. One man has said that God's authority over men has gone the way of king's authority over men. Another has said that God forces his authority on no man. What nonsense men talk! God has not abdicated his authority over men. Some one said to Thomas Carlyle about Margaret Fuller, "She accepts the universe." The grim old philosopher said, "Egad, she'd better!" Of course she had. God holds men to the ultimate doing of his will even though they do not acknowledge his authority, just as the

sun controls every movement of all the bodies large and small in our planetary system.

And *the sun is like God in that it is the sustainer of all life.* It seems to us as we look about as though everything has life within itself, as though animals have their life, and vegetation has its life, and men have their life. Oh no! none of us is independent. The sun is the father and the mother of all living things. Stop its shining, and there is not one heart on the globe that would know how to beat. Take away its influence, and there is not one blade of grass or one leaf that would know how to live. All seeds, all roots, all buds, all tissues, no matter how perfect they are in form, wait for their life until the sun gives it. If you should blot out the sun at once such a winter as we never knew would descend upon all things. Flowers would fall. Colors would fade. Every fluid would freeze. Death would be everywhere, and the world would be a hearse simply whirling about with its unburied dead.

The sun does everything for us. We are completely dependent on its bounty. It gives

us life and it sustains our life. It gives food to nourish the body, colors to delight the eye, and flavors that regale the palate. The clothes that we wear, whether they are silk or wool or cotton, are woven sunbeams. The coal and wood in our grates only give out the light and heat they borrowed from the sun ages ago. Sometimes it would seem as though he is the only one in the universe who does any work. Certainly he is the great farmer, raising the grain that feeds earth's hungry mouths. He is the greatest of laborers; for he by main force lifts the water from the seas and carries it inland in the shape of clouds, and pours it on the land, and so creates the rivers which turn the wheels of industry. He is the master of all artists, who gives the right tint to every flower, and flings out color for a whole landscape, and paints sunsets with a transcendent beauty that makes us helpless in our wonder. Everything we enjoy on earth we owe to the sun. Take away his beneficent influence, and the whole wide world would soon lapse into the chaos out of which he brought it. All the material comforts, all beauty of man's handiwork, all our fine

thoughts, all our rich fancies, all our warm emotions, would wither under the blasting touch of winter at once. The spirit of every man on earth stands in the same relation to God as the source of his soul life as the animals and the vegetation of the earth sustain to the sun as the source of their physical life. As the taking away of the sun from the physical world would bring winter, would bring night, would bring death, so to take away from the mind and heart of man the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ would bring doubt, and darkness, and paralysis, and a death that lasts not only for this world, but collapses into the eternal death of the world to come.

The sun illustrates God's goodness in the indiscriminateness of its shining. I suppose there is nothing anywhere so absolutely impartial as the sun. It makes no distinctions at all. You have a garden. You cultivate beds of portulacca for its rich green leaves and the brightness of its flowers. Into that garden comes the purslane. The farmer calls it "pusley." Everybody hates "pusley." But it is a blood relative of the portulacca. You pull it up, and hoe it out, and

burn it. You call it a weed, while you call the portulacca a flower. But God's sun treats them both alike, as though they were the choicest flowers in the conservatory. And there is the Jamestown-weed—the jimson-weed, the farmer calls it—as vile in odor as it is beautiful in blossom. The sun gives it as much attention as it does your choicest lilies. Some things in the garden bring much more money than other things. But the sun makes no difference between them. It shines on the wild fox-grapes as benignly as on your choicest Delawares. It gives the mullein stalks by the side of the road as much care as it gives your wheat, and it nourishes the quack grass and Canada thistle with just as much pains as it does your strawberries and peaches. The orchard is no more its favorite than is the bank of weeds by the roadside. So it is everywhere. The sun does not favor high rank any more than it does low rank, or culture any more than ignorance. The sun makes no distinction between a king's palace and a peasant's hut. It shines no more kindly on the mansions of the Vanderbilts than it does on the hovel of the squatter in the city's

outskirts. It shines on royal palaces, but also on poorhouses. It shines on thrones, but so it does on the grassy bank on which the tramp sits by the roadside. Its rays are reflected by the beaten gold of the roofs of Eastern monarchs' houses, but so they are by the roof of the hermit's hut that is covered with the straightened-out tin of old fruit cans. It is everybody's sun. Each man, no matter who he is, may take just as much of it as he wishes. God makes his sun to shine on the evil and the good, and his rain to fall on the just and the unjust. These are not man's ways at all. I am not sure they are to man's liking. But these are the ways of grace.

God looks down on this world of men of every sort struggling and quarreling, running through the whole scale of wickedness and meanness and corruption, and he says to his sun, "Shine blessing on them all." He says to the clouds, "Drop showers on all alike," the rich man's broad manor and the poor man's little plot—the field of the man of God and the field of the atheist. And so it is with God's truth and grace. They come to all alike. They appeal to every-

body. Suppose it had been otherwise. Suppose God had been partial, loving only those who love him and hating all others; giving his Son to die for none but those who were his friends—ah, then, what would be our fate today. Blessed be his name, it was not so. God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. By the grace of God he tasted death for every man. He knew that millions upon millions would reject his mercy, but none the less he provided for all, he died for all—for the reprobate no less than for the redeemed. None can ever say that God left him unprovided for, and therefore he was lost.

The sun is like God's mercy in the different effects produced by its shining. Despite the fact that the sun offers all the benefits of its light and heat to all alike, not all receive equal benefit from it. All things are treated alike by the sun, but things act very differently under its influence. The sun pours down its light and heat on our parks, and the trees are covered with foliage, and the grass comes up to cover the slopes. The sun pours down the same light and heat into the Sa-

hara, and nothing comes up. There is just as much sunlight there as anywhere. But it takes two things to develop products, you know, the sun that stimulates and something that can be stimulated. Sand cannot grow, and if it be dry it will let nothing else grow. The sun shines on a rock, but it remains a barren rock still. But the sun shines on the ice, and it melts away into summer. Our fathers used to say that the same sun melts wax and hardens clay. The sun is after all a great discriminator, and it always discriminates in favor of that which cooperates with its shining. On a good soil, for example, a hundredfold comes up. On a medium soil fiftyfold comes up, and on a sterile soil nothing comes up. The sun is there. All the power needed is there. But there must be cooperation on the part of the soil or no advantage is to be had. All the light in the sun cannot help the blind man. All the light in the world will do no good to the man who will not use the light. All the light and heat of the sun in summer will not cover a sluggard's fields with a harvest of grain. Even in the universal bounty of the sun that comes to good and bad alike there

is a point beyond which if you would derive benefit from it, you must be a worker with it. And so in the great husbandry of spiritual things, there is a point beyond which God's Spirit cannot help men. His stimulating influences are shed abroad from one end of the world to the other. There is not a human creature who is not brooded over constantly by the love and mercy of God. Some perceive it and profit by it; some perceive it less and profit less; some are blind to it or unwilling to accept it and they obtain nothing.

So it is in every congregation. The love of God is shed abroad in his house surely. The stimulating power of the Holy Spirit falls on every member of the congregation alike. But all do not respond in the same degree. All do not open their hearts to the same extent. According to your faith be it unto you, Christ said. According to your power of receiving, according to your willingness to appropriate, according to the answer of your being to the heart of God, God's blessing will be upon you.

We are told of a time coming when the sun will go down to rise no more; when the

moon will be turned into blood and dissipated; when the elements will melt with fervent heat and be consumed. Then we shall be gathered into another and a higher kingdom where we shall need no symbol from which to learn about God. We shall need no sun rising to teach us of the Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings. No sun will rise. The moon will shine no more. There will be no stars. But there will be no darkness there. There can be no night where the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light of it. Out of them will pour in abundance the rays of that light which the soul needs, and of which the sun's rays on earth are but the symbol. Then we shall begin to know something of the riches of God's grace as we move about in the light of God in heaven.

There are but two worlds beyond this—a world of darkness where God is not, and a world of light where God is. I have seen worldly men die—and as one of them said, they took a fearful leap into the dark. I have seen Christians die, and as one of them said, they moved into the light. Oh may it be ours to go as the children of God go. As

the sun of this world fades from our vision may we say, " The Lord is my light and my salvation." Close the eyes. Fold the hands. Veil the transfigured face.

" How blest the righteous when he dies! "

V

THE MESSAGE OF THE STARS

He made the stars also.—Genesis 1: 16.

THE MESSAGE OF THE STARS

WHAT marvelous dignity there is in the description of things that the Bible gives—and what unparalleled simplicity, and such brevity as you find nowhere else. God is so used to doing things on a vast scale that he speaks of the creation of worlds as though it was an ordinary occurrence. In less than one verse he tells us of the creation of the sun and moon, and then in three words he tells us of the creation of all the rest of the heavenly bodies. The inspired story runs like this, "God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night," and then the gifted narrator quietly says, "The stars also," or as the English translation of the Bible puts it, "He made the stars also."

The number of the stars is beyond our reckoning. The size of them is beyond our ability to conceive. But God sums up all he has to say about them as he tells the story of creation, in three words, "The stars also." It is as though God put into a postscript

that amazing story of the origin of all those shining worlds that we see in the spread-out sky—"The stars also." For brevity, for sheer splendor, for suggestive sublimity, those words are unapproached by any other words that ever fell from human lips. "The stars also."

Immanuel Kant, the greatest of German philosophers, once said that the two grandest things in nature are the starry heavens at midnight and the conscience in the human breast. Victor Hugo, the great Frenchman, spoke of three grandest things—the ocean, the sky, and the interior of the human soul. Napoleon found in the stars all the proof he wanted that God exists. When some of his officers declared that they did not believe in a God, Napoleon swept his hand across the sky and said, "Gentlemen, who made all these?" What Napoleon said in plain prose, Joseph Addison, the English poet, said in some of the stateliest verse that ever was written. It is a real refreshment to the soul to read his stanzas. They run like this:

> The spacious firmament on high
> With all the blue ethereal sky,
> And spangled heavens a shining frame,

Their great Original proclaim;
The unwearied sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The work of an almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail
The moon takes up the wondrous tale;
And nightly to the listening earth
Repeats the story of her birth;
While all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball!
What though no real voice nor sound
Amid their radiant orbs be found—
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
Forever singing as they shine
"The hand that made us is divine."

Everybody is impressed by the stars. The little child looks up in astonishment and murmurs its little verse:

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are,
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.

And one of our greatest thinkers has gone so far as to say, "An undevout astronomer is mad."

The ancients were interested in the stars because they thought they exercised some special influence upon the earth. Perhaps they were right. If as most people still believe, it is the moon that lifts and lets down the tides of the ocean twice every twenty-four hours; if as some scientists tell us, the spots on the sun affect the climate of the earth and determine whether we shall have abundant or scant harvests, why may not the multitude of the stars have some effect upon us? I do not know about it. But I do know that individualism of every sort is out of date. Nothing is independent. And it may be that some day we shall learn that everything and everybody throughout the universe exert some influence upon everything and everybody else. Some of the teachings of astrology may prove by and by to be more than brilliant guesses, and like Shakespeare's Horatio we may some day learn that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy.

I have never felt any impulse to have some one tell my future from the stars. I have preferred to use my mind and muscle, with God's blessing, to shape my own career. But I have never felt like regarding as a fool the man who believed that other worlds were in touch with ours. We know that star divination was once looked upon as a science. At the court of Catharine de Medici it was honored. Kepler, one of the greatest astronomers who ever lived, declared it a true science. As late as the reign of Charles II, Lilly, the great astrologer, was called before the House of Commons to give his views of future events. As late as the eighteenth century it had its eminent votaries; Napoleon thoroughly believed in his star. I do not see why God might not in a certain stage of the world's development have used men's superstitions to help them to discern that they were at a crisis in the world's history. At any rate we know that a star ran on a special errand at the first Christmas-time to point out the rough cradle of our Lord to those who sought it. And we are told that all the heavenly bodies were shrouded in miraculous eclipse during the

three hours that Christ hung on the cross. And I can easily believe that the conviction that the stars in their courses fought Sisera, may have helped to give victories to Israel. We know too little to be dogmatic. At any rate I am never disposed to quarrel with the man who sees things and tells us what he sees. But I am always ready for an instant quarrel with the man who has lost his sense of wonder, and has no more any feeling of the mystery of things, so that he does not expect to see anything new; who does not see, and who will not see, who shuts his eyes, and denies that anybody can see any more than he does.

David studied the stars reverently but not superstitiously. Out in the wilderness with his flocks the map of the sky was spread out before him. He noticed some stars advancing and some receding. He associated their rising and setting with certain seasons of the year. He had a poetic nature, and night after night, month after month, year after year he read the poem of the constellations, divinely rhythmic, and set it down for us in such psalms as the eighth and the nineteenth, so that we learn to see for ourselves that

" the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork."

It is marvelous how much the Bible has to say about the stars, and how frequently they are used for illustration. Does it wish to declare that God is entitled to worship? It says, " Praise him, all ye stars of light." Does it wish to show what a defense God is to his people? It says, " The stars in their courses fight against Sisera." Does it wish to express inconceivable number? It says, " As the stars of the heaven for multitude." Does it wish to show how exalted God is? It says, " Is not God in his heavens, and behold the height of the stars, how high they are." Does it wish to express God's absolute holiness? It says, " Behold the stars are not pure in his sight." Does it wish to set forth God's omniscience? It says, " He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names." Does it wish to rebuke man's arrogance? It says, " Though thou build thy nest among the stars, I will bring thee down." Does it wish to announce God's sure victory? It represents Him as saying, " I will exalt my throne above the stars." Does it wish to speak of the doom of

the impenitent? It calls them "wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." Does it wish to depict the awfulness of the last day? It says, "The stars shall fall from their places." Does it wish to show forth the glory of the godly? It says, "They shall shine as the stars forever and ever." Does it wish to assure us of the ultimate triumph of Christ? It says, "The sun and the moon and the stars shall be put under his feet." Marvelous power of illustration indeed, the Bible finds in the stars.

The first lesson that the stars suggest to us is about the littleness of man. Any one who has sensibilities, as he looks up into the star-studded sky is sure to cry out with David, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" When Thomas Carlyle looked up at the stars one night he said, "Sad, sad sight!" And men have laughed at him for it. But after all he was only expressing the same thought that David had. Creation arose in all its immensity before him, and this world and all there is in it shrank into littleness, and he wondered whether men were not likely to be overlooked amid the

grandeur and variety of the great worlds that were on every side of him.

I have stood out in the open country looking at the stars, thousands of them in sight, and I knew that with a telescope other stars would appear in parts of the sky that were dark to the unaided eye, and that if we should count all that the most powerful lens would bring into view and those that the photographic plate would register we should run up to a hundred millions in all, and I knew that all that we can see with our greatest instruments is after all nothing compared with what is not seen. Latest estimates tell us that there are a thousand million stars, and every star is a sun. Our sun is one of the smallest of these stars, and yet it is a million and a quarter times as big as our earth. The lot your house stands on compared with the wide stretch of the United States is not as small as our speck of a world is compared with God's vast domain. If this world of ours were burned up, and our sky were wrapped together like a scroll—an event unspeakably terrible to us and to our neighboring worlds—I suppose the universe at large would suffer as little as a forest

does when a single leaf falls from a tree and is borne away on the surface of a brook. To the little, living creatures clinging to that leaf its fall is the destruction of their world. And this planet of ours is nothing but a leaf in the great forest of creation. Naturally when men think of these things they draw the inference that Carlyle drew. They say that men are so insignificant that it is not worth God's while to take care of us. The psalmist and the prophet of old reached a different conclusion. They said that men are so small that it is no trouble for God to take care of us. It is this littleness of ours that makes the protection of the Almighty so dear to us, and that brings to every devout heart emotions of humility and gratitude. Wonder of wonders, that the God who presides over countless millions of worlds should think about me. Wonder of wonders that he whose power is felt to the remotest bounds of creation should brood over me as though I were the only object of his care; that he should know the number of the hairs of our heads and give movement to every drop of blood in our veins, and give to us every breath that we draw, and bestow upon

us every comfort that we enjoy. And highest of all wonders this is, that for the sinful inhabitants of this mite of a world he should give his only Son to die. I should suppose that when this world rebelled against him he would have crushed it in his wrath, and have taken its dust and strewn it through space and have forgotten it. Instead of that, he grieved over it, and cherished it, and redeemed it.

Any one who observes, night after night, the regular procession of the stars across the sky, will perceive that the creator and upholder of the universe is a God of order. John Milton sang, "Order is heaven's first law." But there was a time when where the earth is was no order. All was chaos. There was no flutter of a wing. No creature stirred. No one spoke, and no sound of life was heard. No beam of light relieved the gloom. As far as even God could look, upward, downward, backward, forward, there was nothing. Solitude indescribable. Then God spoke. Forthwith things which now are were made of things which did not appear. The hands that afterward were nailed to the cross to redeem the world, were now

thrust into chaos to create the worlds. "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made," so John said. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible," so Paul said. He laid the foundations of the earth, while the morning stars sang together for joy. He gave being to Arcturus and his sons, and set them in their places. He brought out one world, and swung it into its orbit; he brought out a second world, and swung it into its orbit; he brought out a third world, and swung it into its orbit. He brought out all the worlds there are, and started them on their circuits, and during all the cycles of years that have elapsed since then, he has upheld them as though they were poised on his finger-tips. Where once was confusion now there is harmony, myriads of worlds moving through space but with no clash. So that wherever one looks he can see that there reigns over all a God of order.

It is an inconceivable comfort to think on this when the world is full of turmoil, as it has been for the past ten or twelve years and when the affairs of the nations seem to

be going into chaos, through their suspicions of one another and their plottings against one another. It is difficult to see how people who do not believe in God can keep from going crazy in such times as we have lived through. Every day the events have been so disquieting. Every hour the prospects have been so alarming. To think that the World War, in which nearly ten millions of men were slaughtered, and in which were nearly twenty million deaths as an indirect consequence, should scarcely be over before men are speculating as to how soon the next war will begin. It is horrible. It seems confusion worse confounded. But rest quiet. Do not let your mind be distracted or your heart grow faint. The affairs of men that seem so mixed to us never have gotten beyond the control of God. Go out under the stars. Look up. See the Pleiades. In that little misty spot there are said to be as many as two hundred stars. God manages them all. Look at Orion. In the nebula at the handle of Orion's sword there are uncountable stars, and the nebula itself is computed to be more than two trillion times larger than our sun. God manages them

all. The comets that fly through space at inconceivable speed and in reckless orbits, are yet held by God's rein. He manages all the whirling orbs in limitless space. Can you doubt that he knows how to manage the affairs of the sons of men? It is an easy task to him. Be at peace in your mind. Cast your burden on the Lord. God will manage your personal affairs so as to keep you safe, and he will control the affairs of the nations so as to improve the world's condition and extend his own gracious kingdom.

The stars tell us also of the stability of God's promises. To the ancients the stars were symbols of stability and eternity. "As the stars forever and ever," says Daniel. And why not speak so? Is there any better symbol of changelessness than the stars? The stars are so constant that we may say with no danger of contradiction that the same stars look down on us as looked down upon the Chaldean shepherds. When Adam walked in the cool of the day he saw coming out through the dusk of the evening the same stars that you gazed upon last evening. The stars by which the mariner will guide his vessel tonight are the same by which Colum-

bus guided his three little ships across the Atlantic. The stars last night were drawn up in the same array as when in courses they fought against Sisera. The constellations have not varied in the least from the time when the Egyptians built the pyramids four-square by the compass. They are the same as when the Chaldeans before Abraham's time had a royal observatory and calculated in advance the eclipses of the sun, the same as when Elihu talked to Job about the wonders of the spread-out sky, and the bright light that appeared in it. We have the same stars under the Copernican as under the Ptolemaic system, the same from Calisthenes to Pythagoras, and from Pythagoras to Herschel. From the time when Hesiod called the Pleiades " the seven daughters of Atlas," from the time when Virgil wrote in his Æneid of the " Stormy Orion " until now, all the stars without any failure or stumbling have marched on punctually in the order that God established for their going. Surely a changeless God must have established the stars. And it is an assurance that gives the greatest comfort to us, in the ebbs and the flows of the tides of prosperity, to

know that he who presides over our affairs is not subject to whims as all human creatures are but is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

But the Lord Jesus has told us that even the stars in their changeless orbits are not an adequate symbol of the trustworthiness of God's promises. Now and then a star seems to fade. Now and then a new star appears. Now and then one that has been dim flashes up and shines with a brilliance unknown before, and then fades out of sight. But there are few of these compared with the whole number of the stars. The Saviour, however, could not compare his promises with the stars without taking account of these, and so he said, " Heaven and earth will pass away, but my word will not pass away." Now all through the struggles of life the Christian man has this place of refuge. God is pledged to take care of him, and God does not change. Here is medicine for all his ailments. Here is comfort in all his distresses. Here is light in all his perplexities. Here is inspiration for every time of discouragement. Here is that which sustains him while living, comforts him when

dying, and blesses him with immortality in the world to come. Surely a man is guilty of unspeakable folly if he turns away from the comfort which faith in God brings him.

The stars suggest to us also the grandeur of our destiny. Daniel says that they that be wise shall shine as the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever. Our childhood's song says,

> Oh, ye stars, shine on, shine on,
> Far up in heaven's own blue;
> Some time, some time, I too may shine,
> I may shine as brightly as you.

There will be a great multitude of the redeemed, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, but each one will be luminous. Each one will be distinctly recognized; each one as distinctly celebrated as if in all the fields of glory, from one gate of heaven to the other, he was the only person honored, each Christian worker standing out illustrious, all the story of his achievements to be read in his countenance, his self-denials, his pains and services and victories all published. Before men go out to a war orators always tell them that they

will be remembered by a grateful country, and their names will be commemorated in poetry and song. But go to the cemeteries at Richmond, at Arlington, and at Gettysburg, and you will find ten thousand graves over each of which is the inscription "unknown." Think of the hundreds of thousands of men who perished utterly in the World War, leaving no trace behind them, blown to pieces by the terrific blast of the modern guns. No matter how it promises to do so the world does not remember its heroes. It cannot. But God does. In heaven there will be no memorial to the "unknown soldier" such as we have in every land today. Each will be known to all; known by proclamation of the great Judge who tells of their deeds as he welcomes them into everlasting habitations; known because the story of their gracious life shines forth from their glorified persons. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. But God clearly says that we shall rival the stars in glory. We shall not be like the rockets that make resplendent our celebrations of victory on earth. We shall not be like the lamps that illumine a city for a night in

honor of some returned hero. They glow for a moment or at most for a few hours, and then go out. We are not to be like that. We shall shine as the stars. We must take the dimensions, and measure the intensity of the great suns that shine in our skies to get any idea of our coming greatness. I suppose our wisdom will transcend our highest expectations, knowing everything, knowing even as we are known. Our wealth will be transcendent also; we shall possess all things, for we are to be coheirs with Christ, and all things are his. Our power will be transcendent, and we shall be able to say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Our glory will be transcendent, for we shall be like Christ himself. In that great day all who have toiled for Christ will rise up to immeasurable honor, immeasurable might, immeasurable holiness, immeasurable joy, so that the weakest saint in heaven will have greater glory than all we can imagine now of the archangel. As the stars we shall shine, the promise runs.

You remember that Tennyson in speaking of his own approaching end said,

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me;
And may there be no moaning of the bar
When I put out to sea.

Some like to think of death as the setting of the evening star. I prefer to think of it as the rising of the morning star. I was told of one whose death was like that. It was four o'clock in the morning when she asked to be wheeled to the window that she might look at the sky. She looked and smiled. Those about the bed asked, "What is it you are looking at?" She said, "A star." They said, "What star is it that seems to please you so?" She said, "The bright and morning star, Jesus." I should like to come to my end facing that star. I should like to fix my dying eyes on that star. All other lights will flicker and go out—the lights of banquet tables, the lights of song and story—but this light will shine on. Paul kept his eye fixed on that morning star until he could say, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." Edward Payson gazed upon that star until he could say, "The breezes of heaven fan me." John Tennent looked on that star until he could

say: "Welcome, Lord Jesus. Sweet Lord Jesus. Welcome eternity." No other star ever guided a sailor into so safe a harbor. No other star ever cast its silver light so deep into the waters. No other star ever pierced such an accumulation of clouds. No other star ever lured us on with so holy a luster. The bright and morning star, Jesus! Like him we shall shine. As the stars forever and ever. Transcendent destiny!

VI

THE MESSAGE OF THE SEA

The sea is his, and he made it.—Psalm 95: 5.

THE MESSAGE OF THE SEA

THE sea was very dear to the Saviour. If the mountains were his closet, where he went to commune with his Father, then the sea was his platform where he went to seek the people. How often he trod the shore of the Sea of Galilee! There he found his apostles, turning his back on the young men in the schools of Jerusalem, and choosing for his own the men whose hands were strong and whose chests were made stout by pulling on the oars, and whose heads were made steady by the climbing of the rigging. There by the seaside he taught the people, standing in his boat pulpit, while they thronged and pressed upon one another on the shore. There he fed the multitude upon whom he had compassion as being sheep without a shepherd. There on the bosom of the sea he slept soundly as a child does, while the winds shrieked and the waves frightened even those men who were used to the storms of Galilee. Then when the disciples were rowing hard and making no progress, he came

with stately steps, walking on the water. There as he stood in the prow of the boat, he quietly spoke to the waves, saying, "Peace, be still," and the surface of the water became as glass, and the winds died away. There, after the resurrection, he once more condescended to take breakfast with his humble disciples, and there was heard the thrice repeated confession of love from the lips of penitent Peter. I do not wonder that men go round the world to tread the shore of that sea. It is, on account of its memories, as Dean Stanley has said, "the most sacred sheet of water on earth." I do not wonder that Robert McCheyne, the Scotchman, was far more enamored of the Sea of Galilee than he was of the beautiful lakes of his own native land. How softly his lines flow:

How pleasant to me thy deep blue wave,
O sea of Galilee!
For the glorious One who came to save
Hath often stood by thee.

Fair are the lakes in the land I love,
Where pine and heather grow;
But thou hast loveliness far above
What nature can bestow.

It is not that the wild gazelle
Comes down to drink thy tide;
But he that was pierced to save from hell
Oft wandered by thy side.

Graceful around thee the mountains meet,
Thou calm reposing sea;
But ah, far more! the beautiful feet
Of Jesus walked o'er thee.

The sea is used by the Bible writers for illustration with astonishing frequency. There is hardly an aspect of God's nature, hardly a relation that he sustains to his people, hardly an experience into which his people can come or a trait they can exhibit that is not somehow set forth with the sea as a figure. If it is desired to show the extent of God's possessions by creation the psalmist says, "The sea is his, and he made it." If it is desired to show how far his rulership of nature outstrips man's power, Job says, "He shuts up the sea within doors," and David responds, "Thou rulest the raging of the sea." Amos is thinking of how God can pursue his enemies and he says, "Though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them." David is thinking

of how far extended God's guidance of his people is, and he says, " Though I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall guide me." If the numberless mercies of God are to be set forth, we have Isaiah saying, " His righteousness is as the waves of the sea." If the fulness of the divine forgiveness is to be exhibited, we have it written, " Thou wilt cast their sins into the depths of the sea," and in the light of that passage we see our sins sink like lead into the waters of the ocean, and the waves of the divine mercy flow over them and hide them forever. If we would know how jealous God is of the well-being of even the poorest of his children, we hear the Saviour say, " Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea." If at any time we are discouraged about the slow progress of the kingdom of God, he sends us the assurance of millennial glory that is certain to come as he prophesies, " The earth shall be full of the knowl-

edge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." If we need assurance that God is able to care for us though the billows threaten to engulf us, he sends us this comforting passage, " He measures the waters in the hollow of his hand." If the completeness of the reunion on the resurrection morning is to be announced, we have it said, " The trumpet shall sound, and the earth and the sea shall give up their dead."

One of the most singular things that the Bible says about the sea is that it is utterly to pass away. In among the fascinating features of heaven as John describes them stands this curious prediction, " I saw a new heaven and a new earth, and there was no more sea." That is so singular a statement that it stands out conspicuous above all the other things that the Bible says about the sea. It is a change not readily understood, for the sea is the source of abundant comfort to us. It is the health-giver and the life-preserver of all the world. In one way or another it is the source of all our scenes of beauty. Its shelly shores, its gleaming, plashing waters—one of the grandest voices of nature—are so full of delight that to rob

us of it would leave the world blank with desolation and death. The moon is a sealess world and so it is a lifeless world. Why then in the description of the new heaven and the new earth are we so distinctly told that there will be no more sea?

To understand this we must learn how the sea was regarded by the ancients and especially by the Jews. Navigation was perilous then, filling the sea with horror. *The ancients looked upon the sea with dread.* In those days people stayed at home more than they do today. They were not such globe-trotters as we. Their migratory instincts were more suppressed than in these days when the first desire of a man when he arrives at any place is to know "Where do we go from here?" and to see how quickly he can remove himself to some other place, so that the American motto is said to be "Anywhere but here."

Even the Greeks whose colonies dotted all the north and west coasts of the Mediterranean never were bold sailors. They hugged the shore rather than launched out into the deep. And the Jews were the least maritime of all the peoples of that age.

They never built a navy. They had no naval engagement. Their commerce was borne by foreign ships. Even when they imported timber for their holy temple it was the ships of Hiram, king of Tyre, that brought it to them. They probably never owned a ship larger than the smacks that lined the lake of Galilee. Very naturally their ignorance of the sea made them dread it. Their craft were so small, and clumsy, and unmanageable, the islands and rocks and shores were so poorly defined, and they had no compass, or signals, or lighthouses, or warnings from a government weather bureau; and whoever went out of sight of land under such conditions took his life in his hands. We need not be surprised then, that all the Bible's allusions to the sea, and the images derived from it, refer merely to its cruel and never to its esthetic aspects. It is always regarded as a thing of power and danger, and never as a thing of beauty. The Bible writers tell of the sea being troubled, of its raging, roaring, breaking ships in pieces, filling men with terror, causing them to reel to and fro, and to stagger like a drunken man.

Nor are we able to divest ourselves of this sense of dread of the awful power of the sea. The sea and its dangers are still inseparable in thought. Night and day we have our watchmen patrol our coasts lest some hapless victim of ocean's rage may miss the succor he needs. The sea is still the abode of fury, and sorrow is on the great deep.

Certainly no one who has ever been in a storm at sea can forget it. The winds seem like the sigh of a dying world. Monsters seem to snort in the foam. The billows clap their hands in glee of destruction. Their merriment is the cry of affrighted passengers. With fingers of doom they write on the white sheet of the wave, "Let all that come within this circle perish." It is a time to make one's heart stand still. It is a time to turn one's hair white in a night. None make light of such peril as that. Lips that are unused to it, pray then. And a man is apt to pray straight to the mark when he has a hurricane about him, an ocean beneath him, and eternity so close that he can feel its breath on his cheek. And if God's call has gone forth the vessel hearing the dread call sinks in the turmoil, the waters gurgling

down through hatches and portholes, thousands of feet until it strikes bottom, and all is peace. The helmsman dead at the wheel. The engineer dead amidst extinguished furnaces. Captain dead on the bridge. Passengers dead in the cabins. Buried in the great cemetery of lost steamers beside the City of Boston, the Lexington, the President, the Cambria, the Atlantic, the Titanic, the Lusitania, waiting for the archangel's trumpet to split up the decks, and wrench open the cabin doors, and unfasten the hatches. Oh, I do not wonder in view of these things that when heaven was open to his gaze and John looked about upon its glories, he wrote it down with satisfaction that there was no more sea. This is a world of hazard. But there no dangers ever threaten us. There will be no stormy wind, no raging waters. We shall no more be buffeted by gusts of adversity. Storms of doubt and of conscience, the raging of our own corrupt affections and unsubdued desires will no more distress us. The mists of sin and unbelief will be scattered forever. The tides of sorrow that ebb and flow through the whole of some lives, like waves that

always beat on the same part of the shore, will evermore be checked. All will be peace, perfect, undisturbable peace. Do you wonder that John was enamored of the prospect, and that he wrote it down exultantly, "There was no more sea."

And *the sea stood to the ancients as the symbol of mystery.* There is a legend that Aristotle committed suicide because he could not understand the meaning of the tides. That may not be true, but it is true that in all ages the sea has oppressed men as a great mystery. Stand on an ocean steamer far out on the bosom of the sea. Watch the ship as it plunges down the long incline of one wave and then meets and receives the shock of another and climbs up its side. Look over the wild waste of waters stretching in every direction, and you are a strange man if awe does not fill your heart, and a great sense of the infinite steal over you. Stand on the shore and look out upon the sea. How its boundlessness fills you with a sense of the eternal! Stand and look down into it. How the sense of its fathomlessness oppresses you! Watch its ceaseless waves beat, never tiring, never resting. What are the wild waves

saying? Mystery, mystery, mystery! That was what they said to the ancients, and that is what they are saying to us as well. And in that the sea is a picture of life. Life is a mystery. We are in the midst of a fog. We can see but a little way ahead of us. Our experiences are inexplicable. As David says, "The judgments of God are a great deep." But by and by when we stand on the other shore all this will be changed. There will be no more storm, no more fog, no more mystery. All will be clear to us then. We shall see both the beginning and the end, and we shall know even as also we are known. There will be no more sea, as John says, or if there is, it will be a sea of glass, clear as crystal, into whose profound depths we shall see clearly. It will be a change something like going from the waters of Lake Huron to Lake Superior. Huron is muddy, Superior is clear. As you stand in the prow of the boat when it enters Superior you start back in terror. It looks as though the keel was about to crash upon the sharp rocks below. But those rocks are sixty feet below the surface, and the clearness of the water makes them seem near the top. So it is in

life. Now we try in vain to fathom God's dealings with us. They are a great deep, and the meaning is hidden from us. But by and by the sea will grow clear as crystal, and we shall see through the mystery and understand. We shall know even as also we are known. That is what John meant when he said, "There shall be no more sea." All painful and distressing mysteries will have been cleared up, and no more of them can ever distress us.

These words have yet another meaning. *The sea is the great emblem of change.* "He that wavereth," James says, "is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." "Unstable as water," said the venerable Jacob to his son. There is nothing more unsettled in this world than the sea. It is the facile slave of every chance gust, and of every passing cloud. Now it is as calm as an inland lake, and sirenlike it lures the mariner by its matchless beauty, and soon it rolls mountain high and dashes its white-crested waves laden with wrecks and corpses against the iron rocks. None can build his home on the ever-shifting wave of the sea. The sailor is a perpetual fugitive.

And not only is the sea itself so changeful, but it is also directly or indirectly the cause of almost every physical change that takes place on the face of the earth. If the mountains tell us of the majesty of God, the sea tells us of the might of God. The one is a picture of God in repose; the other is a picture of God in action. The one shows God in his imperial robes seated on his throne; the other shows him with his robes laid aside and his arms bare, busy in his workshop. The sea is God's tool, and with it he effects almost every change that takes place on the face of the earth. Climb the highest mountains, and at the summit, far above where the eagle builds its nest, you are treading the shores of an old-time sea. The shells and corals there are as perfect as when they were first deposited by the retreating wave. When Hugh Miller was trying to account for the shells that he found in the rocks, an old farmer offered him this curt and somewhat rebuking explanation, "When God made the rocks he put the shells in them." It was to him just like a baker putting currants in a cake. No doubt God put the shells there, but by a process different from any

the old farmer ever dreamed of. The land and the sea have changed places since things began. Go down into the darkest and deepest rock caverns of the earth, and you will find traces of fish that swam in ocean's waters; sands that marked the shores of seas that now have no place on our maps; and sinuous tracks that mark the ebb and flow of long-forgotten tides. You cannot name a spot on earth where the waves of the sea have not some time tossed and toiled. It has built our mountains and furrowed our valleys. The continents of old are under the ocean now. The foundations of the church we worship in are laid on the bed of an ancient ocean. And still the ceaseless change goes on. All along our Atlantic coast the waters are steadily encroaching. All along our Western shores they are just as steadily receding. So that in ages to come our land will have become once more the floor of the overwhelming ocean.

And where the sea may not itself come, it sends its agents to do its bidding. Its vapors rise and wing their flight far inland where the roar of the sea is never heard, until arrested by some lofty peak they form the

glaciers which grind our mountains to dust, and they become the source of the rivers which bear away the earth of which future continents are to be built. Well, then, may we speak of the sea as the emblem and the cause of change. All will be different in heaven, says John. "There will be no more sea." On all persons and things in this world is written the dreary doom, "Passing away." But heaven is the land of permanence. In that blessed land there will be no constant change of scenes; no succession of persons; no altering of circumstances. There will be what we always have longed for—progress but not change, growth but no decay. Joy will not be transitory. Possessions will not slip from our grasp. Moths will not consume our treasures. Thieves will not break through and steal. Friendships will not by changing mood be turned into enmity. Our crown of glory will not fade. Pleasure then will be pleasure forevermore. Now tides ebb and flow; suns rise and set; moons wax and wane; rest gives place to weariness and aching; friendships are formed and sundered; health yields to fever heat and to the chill of death.

Change, change, change! No wonder in the midst of it all we often sing:

> Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
> Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
> Change and decay in all around I see;
> O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

But in heaven, John says, change will be at an end. We shall evermore be with him who is changeless. "There will be no more sea."

But the deepest meaning of these words that promise the abolishment of the sea we have yet to consider. To appreciate them aright we must think of where and by whom they were written. The apostle John long outlived his companions. When he had grown very old—sixty years after the resurrection—while he was still ministering to his church at Ephesus, the emperor Domitian instituted the cruelest of the persecutions against the early church. John was banished to Patmos, a lonely, rocky island in the Ægean Sea. For years in this island he lived the lonely, weary, heart-sick life of an exile. A perpetually tossing, very dangerous sea shut him up, and kept him away from everybody and everything that he loved. *The sea was to him the most dreadful of prison walls.*

We are told that he often climbed the hills of Patmos and looked out over the waters toward Ephesus and his own Palestine.

And not only was he thus separated from those who loved him and from those whom he loved, but he was restrained from the Master's work. The cause of the Lord needed the aid of every faithful arm, but he could do nothing. A feeling of sore despondency must often have seized him and sickened him as he thought of all from which the cruel sea divided him. And when to compensate him for the pain of his exile and to enrich the future church, the panorama of the new heaven and the new earth was spread out before him, with what unutterable joy must he have seen that from horizon to horizon there was no more sea—nothing to separate him forevermore from the things and the friends he loved. And these words come home with a strange sweetness to all of us. For what family is there that has all its loved ones sheltered under the same roof? What home is there whose happy circle of faces is complete, and from which no one has gone forth to do his bit for God and humanity, and to make his own way

in the world? And often by day and by night, in the twilight hour when we sit and think, when we long to see their faces and hear their voices—how often in such hours as these do we long with all our souls for the place where those whom we shall never see again in this world of partings and tears shall be restored to us, and where the home circle nevermore shall be broken, and the inhabitants shall go out no more forever! It was such a land as that that John looked forward to when he said, "There shall be no more sea."

I do not dare to close without saying that I have a great fear that the future may bring to some of us eternal separation from those we love instead of eternal reunion with them. For we do read of a great gulf fixed so that none can pass it, which while it keeps the weary ones of God forever free from the troublings of the wicked, keeps also those who have rejected God's grace in eternal, hopeless separation from him.

But most of us are hoping to see the blessed consummation of all things in Christ. We are hoping for a world from which sin and all the shadows it casts will have van-

ished; where we shall dwell under cloudless skies; and where we shall rest untroubled because the last billow of earth has died away in far-off music. For a while we may be driven up and down under starless skies, through unknown seas, by contrary winds, longing for the day, all the billows dashing over us, deep calling unto deep and wave unto wave, so that we cry,

> Jesus, lover of my soul,
> Let me to thy bosom fly;
> While the nearer waters roll,
> While the tempest still is high.
> Hide me, oh, my Saviour, hide,
> Till the storm of life is past;
> Safe into the haven guide,
> Oh, receive my soul at last.

And when we so cry he will hear us, and bring us out of our distresses. He will make the storm a calm so that the waves thereof are still. And we shall be glad because we are quiet. So he will bring us unto our desired haven.

VII

THE MESSAGE OF THE MOUNTAINS

As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.

—*Psalm 125: 2.*

THE MESSAGE OF THE MOUNTAINS

It is common for men to speak of how cruel nature is. That is entirely in line with the prevailing philosophies of the day. The law of the jungle rightly prevails among men even, we are told. There is no such thing as compassion anywhere since the notion of a heavenly Father who created us and a kind Providence who cares for us, has quite gone out of fashion. At the time the Titanic sank, Hall Caine wrote a poem in which he spoke of the "blind, insensate, heartless force that smothers man in the sea." And that hard-heartedness that may seize us at any moment and without any feeling whatever cast us down, is supposed to be all about us. Somebody has taken the trouble to gather together all the shocking calamities of the past quarter of a century. A gruesome recital it makes, floods and earthquakes, the burning of great cities, the devastation of tidal waves, the sinking of ocean liners, the destruction wrought by

hurricanes and cyclones. To dwell on it all would make one as bitter a pessimist as Voltaire was. John Stuart Mill makes a fearful indictment of nature when he says:

> Nature impales men, breaks them on the wheel, casts them to wild beasts, burns them to death, crushes with stones, starves with hunger, freezes with cold, poisons with exhalations. Once nature kills every being that lives. Nature does this, too, on the largest scale. A single hurricane destroys the hopes of a season; a flight of locusts or a flood desolates a district, a trifling chemical change in the potato starves a million people. Her explosions of fire-damp are as destructive as human artillery, her plagues surpass the poisoned cups of the Borgias.

Nothing that can be thought of is omitted from that indictment, and John Stuart Mill with his relentless logic and his pitiless sarcasm charges the cruelty and heartlessness of it all upon God.

Nothing could be more different from this than the attitude of the Lord Jesus toward all things natural. He walked about as one in love with nature. He called our attention to the beauty of the wayside flowers, and told us of God's care for the grass that was trodden beneath our feet, and he amazed us by telling us that God cared so much for

worthless sparrows that when one of them fell to the ground he was there to build a grave for it. He found nature everywhere friendly and helpful to man, God's children. And all the great teachers who have revealed God's will to men have been like him. The Bible smells of the fields, and the men who wrote it were neighbors to nature. They were like Thoreau, who felt that the folks who could live out of doors were most to be envied. The source of the best thoughts, and the cure for the worst thoughts, is to talk with God in the open. David looked up at the stars in the Syrian night and said, "When I behold the heavens, the work of thy fingers, what is man that thou art mindful of him?" Isaiah looking into some barnyard said, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Amos was so intimate with nature that from a basket of summer fruit he could gather lessons that have been potent for twenty-five hundred years. Micah called on the mountains to witness that God's people had rebelled against him, and asked the foundations of the earth to listen

to God pleading with them to return to him. If we are right in heart we can see God everywhere. The mountain is then no more a great heap of earth and rock but a symbol of God's majesty. The lake mirrors not simply the surrounding landscape but some of the beauty of God's own face. Under the tuition of God's Book we can see the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves repeated in every harvest, and the water turned into wine in every vineyard on the hillside. We can see virtue flow from the hem of Christ's garment whenever an anodyne soothes, or balm heals, or a poor, sick creature is brought up from the gates of death to fulness of life. The sky, the sea, the mountains, the rivers, pay tribute to God's glory. There is not a leaf, nor a flower, nor a dewdrop but bears God's image and every common bush is afire with God's presence. Every flower stalk is another certificate of the wisdom and goodness of God, and the very firmness of the ground you tread upon is but a parable of the splendid firmness of God's promises upon the unshakable sureness of which you rest.

Of all nature's features none is more elo-

quent about God than the mountains are. He who gets into the confidence of the hills gets near to nature's heart. You who spent your childhood in mountainous regions know what sources of inspiration the hills are. They know how to preach the greatest sermons. Down in some flat country where there is hardly a hill so high that you cannot see over the top of it, the mountains are the one thing you miss, and though you have made a fortune down in the flatlands you say to yourself every little while, "I must get back to the hills again." Sometimes you feel as though your very soul will die unless you can get away into some valley hedged in from the sunlight on both sides and lose yourself in its magnificence. Not long ago I was obliged to take a long ride through the mountains of Pennsylvania, incomparable in their beauty, wooded as they are to the top. It was in the early morning when I ran up the curtain and looked at them from my Pullman berth, and again I felt, as I had many times before, that I was being lifted up from the things that belonged to earth and being bathed in the vigor of heaven itself. What an inexplicable power these mountains have

to detach us from things sordid, and introduce us to the very presence of God!

God's people of old were very fond of the mountains. There is hardly an aspect of God's nature which they have failed to set forth in pictures of the mountains. Do they wish to set forth God's eternity, they say, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." Did they wish to counsel the soul to make of God a refuge, they said, "Flee, O my soul, as a bird to your mountain." Did they wish to set forth the rare privilege of being a messenger for God, they said, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace." Do they wish to declare that the godly man is safe, they say, "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth forever." Did they wish to portray Israel's delight in leaving Egypt, they made all nature sympathetic and said, "The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs." Did they wish to show God's

strength, they said, "He taketh up the mountains and weigheth them as a very little thing." Did they wish to hint at the dreadfulness of God's wrath, they said, "He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; he toucheth the hills, and they smoke." Did they wish to tell how instant a helper God is when he is needed by his people? They said, "He is a very present help in time of trouble, therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Would the Bible give us a superb picture of motherly desperation in defense of her children, it presents Rizpah on the rock for three months, fighting back the vultures and the jackals from the bodies of her sons. Would the Bible show us man's hardness of heart and the power of the gospel to subdue it, it tells us of the "hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces." Would our Lord tell of how his church can resist every assault made upon it, he says, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Would God picture the terror of the lost in the last great day, he represents them as "crying for the moun-

tains to fall on them and the rocks to cover them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb."

Mountains have played a conspicuous part in the history of redemption. The old law was given to Moses among the split rocks of Mount Sinai. The devil met the Son of God in mortal combat when he took him to an exceedingly high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and offered them to him if he would fall down and worship him; but the Saviour vanquished him by quoting a verse of Scripture that said, " Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." That great sermon of the Master in which he outlines the ideals of the kingdom, and which so amazed all who heard it, was delivered also among the basaltic rocks of the Mount of Beatitudes. A glimpse of the Saviour's glory which he renounced for a while that he might bear our sins and carry our sorrows, was given to the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. And at last the Saviour was led forth from Jerusalem and was crucified, and there he died among the rocks of Golgotha at Mount Calvary.

There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.

And buried amid the limestone rocks of Joseph's sepulchre, with earthquake shock that shattered the tomb and burst the seal, he came forth victor over the grave, and completed for us the redemption he came to achieve. Hugh Miller, an elder of St. John's Presbyterian Church in Edinburgh, wrote a book which he called *The Testimony of the Rocks,* in which he portrayed the ways of God in creation. We might write a new *Testimony of the Rocks* and tell of the part which these mountains I have named played in God's work of redemption.

Nothing more impresses men with a sense of God's power than the mountains do. What weight there is in them; and how massive they are. I looked from the window of a hotel in Seattle. The day had been unsettled, with clouds most of the time covering the sky. But just at that moment they cleared a bit and gave me a sight of Mount Rainier in the distance lifting its snowy height against the sky. Awed into silence

by the splendid vision I seemed to hear an angelic choir singing, "He taketh up the mountains as a very little thing." The hands of God only are equal to the making of a mountain. His hands alone packed together land and tossed up the rocks to their great heights. What are human works compared with these wonders? What are men in the presence of them?

Or perhaps you have seen El Capitan? What majesty is there? Standing before that sheer wall of rock rising thirty-three hundred feet into the air, as I looked at it in the morning light, I felt as though I were standing before the very throne of God, and I was as speechless as though I were called for judgment. One does not wish to talk when confronting El Capitan. Frivolity is impossible there. Children doubtless could frolic and play, but a mature mind is sure to have thoughts too deep for words while face to face with that splendid piece of God's handiwork. But in your own silence you hear the heavenly choirs singing again, "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains," and your own soul sings in antiphonal response,

Upon the hills of holiness,
He His foundations sets.

To be candid, the only thing I felt like doing while standing before that most wonderful spectacle of the Yosemite Valley, was to break forth into song. I wanted to sing,

I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills,
My heart with rapture thrills
Like that above.

And I wanted to sing Martin Luther's marvelous hymn about God being a protecting mountain to his people, *Ein feste burg ist unser Gott.*

That leads me to say that the Bible in many a passage teaches that *God is an unfailing bulwark for his people.* He has been a refuge for the oppressed in all ages. No matter what the sort of trouble they suffered, nor how aggravated it was, if they fled to him they were safe. David was constantly crying out in his psalms, "Blessed be the Lord, my rock, and my defense." One hundred and thirty times the Bible speaks of God as the refuge of his people and their sure defense under the aspect of a rock. And that has been the thought that

the mountains have inwrought into all history. Liberty has been stamped out on the plains, but a comparatively small band could maintain the battle for freedom if they were sheltered by the mountains. The strength of the hills was theirs when they took refuge among them. So Israel took refuge among the fastnesses of Horeb when they were hard pressed. The mountains of Switzerland have always been the cradle of liberty. The Waldensians have been able to preserve their religious freedom by taking refuge among the mountains of southwestern Europe. Scotland and New England in turn bear witness to the fact that liberty cannot be kept from a people if the hills are near. Hugh Miller has called our attention to the fact that the early geologic history of a country seems to be typical of its subsequent civil history. Regions of the earth's surface which have known fierce cataclysms that have uptilted the strata and penetrated the crust of the earth with yawning chasms, have later become the natural strongholds of the earth where the true battles of the race have been fought. He points out to us that Greece, the Holy Land, the Swiss Cantons,

Scotland, New England, "all have been grand theatres alike of geologic and patriotic strife."

In a remarkable way Willa Cather has brought out in her novel *Death Comes for the Archbishop,* what a defense the mesas of the Southwest were to the Indians who dwelt there. She describes the bishop of such a region riding along with his youthful Indian guide. The bishop said, "But how did men first think of living on the top of naked rocks like these, hundreds of feet in the air, without soil or water?" The guide, Jacinto, shrugged and said, "A man can do a whole lot when they hunt him day and night like an animal. Navajos on the north, Apaches on the south; the Acoma run up a rock to be safe." And so the bishop gathered that all this plain had once been the scene of a periodic man-hunt; these Indians, born in fear and dying by violence for generations, had at last taken this leap away from the earth, and on that rock had found the hope of all suffering and tormented creatures—safety. They came down to the plain to hunt and to grow their crops, but there was always a place to go back to. If a band

of Navajos were on the Acoma's trail, there was still one hope; if he could reach his rock—sanctuary! On the winding stone stairway up the cliff, a handful of men could keep off a multitude. The rock of Acoma had never been taken by a foe but once—by Spaniards in armor. And then this gifted novelist turns to God's ancient people for a parallel and says, " And the Hebrews of the Old Testament, always being carried captive into foreign lands—their rock was an idea of God, the only thing their conquerors could not take from them." And so as the caravans of the Jews moved from all parts of the country toward Jerusalem at feast times they went singing "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever."

The thing which the people of God wished to emphasize was not simply that they had a divine protector, but that his care of them was perpetual. " The Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever." *It was the permanence of God's grace that the mountains typified.* They were the symbol of fixedness, a guaranty of eternal secur-

ity. Sooner shall the mountains depart, or the hills be removed from their places, than that God's kindness or covenant of grace be turned away from his people. " The same yesterday, today, and forever."

It must be admitted that mountains do not always have this kindly aspect. They seem like a sterile waste. They have a somber, forbidding air, and give one a sense of solitariness that is to be dreaded. I never shall forget the unhappy impression made upon me by the bare brown sides of the Sierra Madres. It seemed to me that I should be in perpetual gloom if I were obliged to live always in sight of them. But you know the people of California do not look upon them so. They discern behind the mountain's severity an unmeasured beneficence. While the great masses of rock tell of a power that is oppressive, every blade of grass in the valleys nurtured by the water of which the mountains are the source, tells of the mountains' kindliness. The Alps have been called Europe's refrigerators. The cool currents of air that come down from those heights save the people who dwell down on the plains from stagnation. And her peaks laden with

snow and her ravines packed with ice do better than that. Michelet called the glaciers of the Alps "the devil's chariots." They might better be called "the chariots of God." The clouds might forget to give the valleys the water they needed, but those valleys are not dependent on the clouds and they are not shut up to cisterns when they have those stores of ice that send down such rivers as the Rhone and the Arve to give them their grains and their fruits.

But the mountains have richer things than material comforts to give us. They not only yield us a salubrious climate and fertile fields, but give to those who dwell near them a sturdiness of character that is striking. *The strength of the hills becomes part of the moral make-up of the inhabitants.* It is doubtful whether you could produce a puny race of mountain-dwellers. And not only vigor of mind and character comes from having one's home among the rocks, but Ruskin has shown us that in other ways the rocks impart their own nature to people. He declares that the inhabitants of granite countries have a force and healthiness of character about them that clearly distin-

guish them from the inhabitants of less pure districts. He says:

> It is almost impossible to make a cottage built in a granite country look miserable. Rough it may be, neglected, cold, full of the aspect of hardship, but it never can look foul; no matter how carelessly, how indolently its inhabitants may live, the water at their doors will not stagnate, the soil at their feet will not allow itself to be trodden into slime; they cannot so much as dirty their faces or hands if they try. Do the worst they can, there will still be a feeling of firm ground under them and pure air about them, and an inherent wholesomeness which it will need the misery of years to conquer.

We know that when Jesus Christ was worn out with his work, in which "virtue went out of him," he used to repair to the mountains for recuperation.

> Cold mountains and the midnight air
> Witnessed the fervor of thy prayer.

When he had to gather strength for any great task he prepared himself for it by a night in the mountain's solitude. We have all of us felt this singular, invigorating influence of the mountains. The spirit responds to it more quickly than the body. Somebody has said that the Alps are a play-

ground for the tired, a classroom for the scholar, and a cathedral for the worshiper. Thus body, mind, and soul are invigorated. Coleridge found in the Matterhorn a true temple, with foundations of rock, pavements of cloud, choirs of streams, altars of snow, ceilings of purple, lighted by stars, whose builder and maker is God. William Blake, the English artist and poet, looked upon nature as "an illusion of Satan," and because William Wordsworth loved nature so much he called him an idolator. But you cannot love nature too much if you let it lead you up to nature's God. Lacordaire, the great preacher of Notre Dame in the early part of the nineteenth century, wrote one day to a friend, " I have said good-bye to the oceans and the rivers and the mountains." He had a sort of exultation in writing it. Perhaps he turned his back on them only to turn his face toward the God who made them. So it was with John Ruskin. He said the Alps swept him off his feet. He fell on his knees and prayed.

VIII

THE MESSAGE OF THE CLOUDS

Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.

Psalm 36: 5.

THE MESSAGE OF THE CLOUDS

THESE words are poetry. They are quoted here for the same reason that we put flowers in the pulpit in church, or on the center-table at home—that by their beauty and purity and the lovely suggestions which they exhale like fragrance, our minds and hearts may be carried out of the prosaic routine of daily life into the world of spiritual beauty of which they speak.

How restful a visit to God's open country is, when nature is in the lovely garb of summer! The grass has not yet lost the tender green of the springtime. The trees have yet their freshest, richest foliage. The fields are gay with buttercups and daisies. The roses embower the cottages with their wealth of blossom. The sky has a depth of color that lures the heart as well as the eyes heavenward. No matter where you live you feel the influence of it all. Shut up as you may be to city streets, your heart plays truant, and runs off to the highlands. There is much whispering in our breasts in the

early days of summer, and the voice of the fields and woods, of the mountains and the sea, is heard appealing to us as the bride appeals to her lover in Solomon's Song saying:

> Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.
> For lo, the winter is past and gone.
> The flowers appear on the earth,
> The time of the singing of birds is come,
> And the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land.

And if it is at all possible every one of us ought to accept the invitations of nature. It is good for us now and then to be turned out of doors; to look down at the earth and see the beauty that God has strewn broadcast there; to look up at the sky and see the beauty that is scattered so lavishly there. The old legend told of a warrior who gained new strength every time he touched the earth. And a new spiritual vigor comes to us every time we flee from the clamor and the tumult of the city and give ourselves, if only for a few hours, to meditating on the wonderful works of God as seen in the grass and the flowers, in the birds and the trees, in mountain height and the wide stretch of

the sea, in the star-studded sky and the clouds that float there like great ships laden with a merciful cargo, destined for ports that God has appointed. It is man's duty to get what glimpses he can of nature as God made it. If we can do no more we ought to betake ourselves for an hour each week to the park and there look on rock and tree, and be uplifted by the blue of God's sky, and be quieted by the green of God's grass, colors more beautiful than any others on earth. And if we cannot get even an hour's respite we ought to try to imagine nature's beauties, as Goldsmith did when he was shut up in his London garret, and as many a poor invalid is obliged to do in a stifling tenement.

Of all the sights of nature none is more beautiful than the procession of the clouds, and it is one that takes little trouble to see. No long journey is necessary; unless you wish to look down upon the clouds no hard climbing needs to be done. You have but to drop down where you are and lift your eyes skyward, and you look upon a scene that no painter can copy. Here are materials that no hand but God's has manipulated. Almost every landscape over which you have looked

bears marks of man's handiwork. Often its most delicate features are the results of man's thought and labor. But the skyscape is different. God works alone there. And what marvelous things he does there! Sometimes the clouds seem to be a great tabernacle upon the mountaintop, quiet, still, and mysterious, in which God hides himself. Sometimes as a storm comes up the clouds look like a bombarding army; the folds of a cloud rolling out from the interior, with darting lightnings and resounding thunders, celebrating the advance that is made, seem to enwrap an almighty Being who is bent on reducing all who are in his path to submission. It was such a convulsion that Cowper had in mind when he said of God,

> He plants his footsteps in the sea
> And rides upon the storm.

And what changing shapes the clouds assume. Never for five minutes are they alike. Now they are like the enchanted castles in Spain that your lively fancy has built; now they are troops of horsemen advancing to the fray; now they are a procession with banners gaily celebrating a victory; now

they are a legion of angels black with wrath, transformed while you look at them into angels of light by a sudden burst of sunshine. Often the sky is a monster art-gallery filled with master-paintings, to every one of which God has put his signature. In the morning the blaze of color would make you think that the world is aflame, and in the evening as the sun sinks to rest the sepulcher that receives it is more brilliant in its setting of rubies than any fabled tomb of Oriental monarch. And how the fabric of which they are made varies. Sometimes they are lacelike, with the most delicate tracery in them, and graceful circles and semicircles. And they wave and toss and sink and soar and scatter such abundance of color and shape and suggestiveness as is overwhelming. If you never have sat down for a full hour of watching the clouds you are like a man who has lived in Paris but never has visited the Louvre, or like a man who has dwelt all his life in Rome yet never has seen the treasures of the Vatican, or like one who has lived all his life in the village of Niagara but never has visited the Falls. More than a hundred and sixty times the

Bible makes direct mention of the clouds. In reading the Bible the clouds are as much in our view as they are in our daily life, and it is high time that we recognized their beauty and availed ourselves of their suggestions to us.

One can easily believe that God delights in contemplating the beauty of nature, he has made so much of it. We are told that when creation was finished God looked round about on all things he had made and behold it was very good. Solomon, inspired by the Spirit of God, declared, "He hath made everything beautiful in its time." We may never have thought of it, but it seems one of the proofs that man is made in the image of God, that what we call the beauties of nature make no appeal to any creature in the world except to him. The ox grazes on the hillside, and there is a bunch of violets growing at its feet, but to it they are no more than a bunch of dried stubble, and there might be the most ravishing visions presented to one's view in the sky, but its eyes would be kept on the ground, and its thoughts if it has any would be limited by the horizon of its stomach. When we con-

struct a stall for a horse we have in mind only animal needs. We plan for warmth, ventilation, cleanliness, food, rest, and that is all. Any touch of beauty we put into the stable is for our own eyes and not for the horse. If that horse could appreciate one stroke of beauty it would change things instantly and tremendously both for him and for you. It would show that he had a nature akin to our own and we should build for him a home instead of a stable. Now when God built this world for us he did more than provide for our animal needs. We needed more than just good housing and feeding. We needed beauty for the eye, melody for the ear, great truths to satisfy the mind, and great affection to satisfy the heart. Any man who has discernment as he looks about can discover that God has made abundant provision for all these crying needs.

All through the Bible we can see that *clouds were to the Hebrews the symbol of God's living presence.* The psalmist says, "Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." And again he says, "He maketh the clouds his chariot; and

walketh upon the wings of the wind." "He holdeth back the face of his throne and spreadeth his cloud upon it." When Moses went up into the mount to meet God there were "thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount." And again we are told that

> Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. . . And Moses went into the midst of the cloud. . . When Moses went into the tabernacle the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door. . . On the day that the tabernacle was reared the cloud covered the tabernacle. . . When the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle they journeyed. . . As long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents.

And when the Temple was built by Solomon to take the place of the tabernacle and the priests marched into it with great procession and great anthem, it was a cloud that descended and filled the temple as a new assurance that God was still with his people. Afterward there came a long period of separation from God and forgetfulness of him. The land was given over to idolatries. The Israelites were carried away from their

homes and transplanted in other lands. And through all those dreary years there is no reference to any cloud descending upon Israel. Israel is without a cloud because Israel is without the manifested presence of God. But at last the time came for a new revelation of himself. And so it was out of a cloud that the angels sang their song when Christ was born. It was a cloud that wrapped about the Saviour and Moses and Elias, when Christ was transfigured on the mount. It was in the midst of a cloud which darkened the sun for three hours that our Lord died. It was a cloud that received him out of men's sight when he ascended from Olivet, after his resurrection, as though God reached down his great arms to welcome the Son of his love back to his bosom. It was in a cloud of glory that the martyrs ascended to God, John tells us. And it is in a cloud that Christ will descend when he returns to judge the earth. "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him," Ezekiel says. "Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory," the Master himself says. Clouds, then, all through the Bible are sym-

bols of his presence with his people. They are the tabernacles in which the Almighty has an abiding-place.

Again, *clouds are the abodes of mystery.* When the cloud descended upon Israel it meant that God was near them. But it suggested also that he was hidden from them as completely as though he was not present. He was revealed, but he was shrouded from them as well. There is nothing more impenetrable to human vision than a cloud. Even if it is a sign of God's presence, it is a challenge to human understanding. Every demonstration we can make that God exists, raises the inquiry in our minds, " Canst thou by searching find out God? " We know that we cannot. We can know that there is a God, and know it with a certainty that brooks no denial, and yet be baffled when we undertake to tell what we know about him. Our ignorance of God is dense except as we appropriate the knowledge that his only begotten Son has revealed to us. " No man hath seen God at any time, but he which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him." We have much need to remember this.

Two groups of men confront us today. On the one side there are many students of the things of nature so obsessed with some theory of evolutionary development that they have no hesitation in saying that they have dispensed with all need of a God in the midst of his own universe, and they make the emphatic statement that God does not exist. On the other hand there are men who profess to know all about God. The name of God falls from their lips lightly. The cherubim and seraphim veil their faces before him, but these men assume to play familiar with the most high God. The familiarity of affection God permits and invites. But this familiarity that proceeds from vain conceit, brings God's name into contempt. Matthew Arnold said that some men treat God as though he were their next-door neighbor. I must confess that some theologies I have read have warranted that criticism. Some men have undertaken to make a complete catalogue of God's attributes. They have gone about him and surveyed him as a surveyor measures a mountain. As a phrenologist feels a man's head and gives him a chart of it, so some men have under-

taken to trace out the faculties of God and make a chart of him. It is against this tape-measure theology, against this irreverent attempt to fathom and measure the infinite and the eternal, that God sets this symbol of his presence, the descending, enveloping cloud. He thus has made it clear to us that while he is very near to every one of us, he yet is far beyond our understanding.

The clouds suggest not only the mystery by which we are surrounded but they *have come to stand for the troubles that intrude into our lives.* We speak of our days of prosperity as sunshiny days when there is not a cloud in the sky. But the days of melancholy, when hope seems to have died out of the life, and sorrow succeeds sorrow, and doubts come unbidden into the soul, and disappointment at our broken plans and foiled purposes begets despondency and despair, we speak of as cloudy and stormy times. It is a true figure. Longfellow has that thought in mind when in his poem on " The Rainy Day," he insists that every life knows some sadness, saying,

> Into each life some rain must fall,
> Some days must be dark and dreary.

To be sure to the child of God there is consolation in every sorrow. He knows that even the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings, and it is enough for the servant to be as his Master. But in the midst of the sorrow the darkness is often so dense as to shut out all sense of the divine presence. Well may all of us pray,

> Oh, may no earth-born cloud arise
> To hide thee from thy servant's eyes.

In our day some men have so lost the consciousness of God's care of them that they have no recourse when the inevitable sorrows come upon them. They remind one of what the poet Hazlitt said, that when Jacob was on earth there was a ladder reaching to heaven, but now the heavens have gone off and become astronomical. To have a sense of God's nearness to us at all times, in darkness and in light, is to have the feeling of security that the Italian hermit had, who lived on the top of a mountain in his native land. Some one asked him if he did not feel it dangerous to live so many miles from a human habitation. He replied, " No, Providence is my very next-door neighbor."

I do not know of anything that is *so likely to strip us of all our little conceits* as to our own importance *as great banks of clouds* rolling up into the heavens will. David looked up into the midnight sky and said, "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him?" So we all have felt ourselves shrivel into a mere nothing as inky storms have gathered themselves in the sky over our heads. Is there anything that seems to have a might that is overpowering more than a great mass of thunderheads filling the sky? Have you never lain abed at night when a summer storm has taken possession of heaven and earth, and listened to the tumult of nature's mighty voices, the rush and triumph of the wind, the swirl and dash of downpouring torrents, the roar of the struggling trees, while the lightning seemed determined to sweep the world with fire, and the thunders crashed until the whole earth seemed to shake with the convulsion? What an atom you seemed to be as you lay there in that blackness of darkness! What do men's little

airs and triumphs count for then? Lift up your voice, and you could not be heard an arm's length away. Muster all your strength, and you feel that you are nothing but a leaf driven before the wind. In that contest of forces that the clouds brought down to you, you were driven back to some sense of what you are, and like a little child you could do nothing but cry out for your great heavenly Father to take care of you. And when morning came, not only was the earth cleansed and renewed by the storm, but if you are an intelligent, reverent child of God, you found that your own soul was purified, and restored by it to the simplicity and meekness of a child as well. It was in a storm that the Saviour came to the disciples walking on the sea. It would be ample justification for all trouble and make it something to thank God for, if it was a means of bringing the Saviour to us.

Indeed *clouds are the means of bringing to us some of nature's scenes of unsurpassable beauty.* We owe all our sunsets to the clouds that hang in the sky. The clouds are a canvas on which the sun paints visions that men might well marvel at, as Moses won-

dered at the spectacle of the burning bush. Everybody admires a glowing sunset, but if it was not so common, if it was a phenomenon that could be observed only once in ten years, and in some out-of-the-way place in the world, from every part of the globe many pilgrims would gather to see it. And there is the familiar sight of the rainbow. It is known everywhere. No one land can lay exclusive claim to it. It is one of the most marvelous sights in the world, and yet north, south, east, and west, everybody has seen it. And there is no purpose at all in its existence except God's delight in beauty, and his wish to convey his assurance of mercy to men in a lovely way. Some time ago when I was making a little journey in a railroad train we ran through a storm. Soon we passed it. Off to the east it was still raining. Off to the west the sun was shining. For full twenty-five miles as we rode along, nearly an hour's ride, there on the bank of dark clouds to the east a rainbow followed us. The most beautiful thing God ever painted is a rainbow, and yet we cannot have that thing of beauty, except as you have a storm-cloud. So all through life when

clouds of sorrow gather about us, sooner or later God's sunlight breaks through, and our sorrow is relieved by the bright bow of his promise. Well did William Cowper, who was much given to melancholy, sing:

> Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
> The clouds ye so much dread
> Are big with mercy, and shall break
> With blessing on your head.
>
> Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
> But trust him for his grace;
> Behind a frowning providence
> He hides a smiling face.

As Job said so significantly far back in the world's twilight, "And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds." Without doubt it is true that from the time when the first mist arose and watered the ground, to the last cloud that shall veil the face of the sun, clouds always have conveyed to us some needed blessing. Yet men have usually seen the darker aspects of the clouds, and have looked upon them as threatening disaster. Clouds are really shallow and transient affairs. You can soon pass through their depths to a region where the sun is always shining. And when the clouds shroud

you thickly about for days, you know that they have simply hidden the hills and have not removed them, and that ere long the clouds will lift, and vanish, and as Job said, "the wind passeth and cleanseth them," and there will lie the landscape just as before, but refreshed and beautified. It is a possession beyond price to have the disposition that Robert Loveman had when in one of his best-known songs he told of what the rainy days which set most other people into a fume and a fret, meant to him:

It isn't raining rain to me,
  It's raining daffodils;
In every dimpled drop I see
  Wild flowers on the hills;
The clouds of gray engulf the day
  And overwhelm the town;
It isn't raining rain to me,
  It's raining roses down.

It isn't raining rain to me,
  But fields of clover bloom,
Where every buccaneering bee
  May find a bed and room;
A health unto the happy!
  A fig for him who frets!
It isn't raining rain to me,
  It's raining violets.

IX

THE MESSAGE OF THE SHEEP

I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

—*John 10: 14.*

THE MESSAGE OF THE SHEEP

A FLOCK of sheep grazing on the hillside, such as we may see anywhere in the country, was the text our Saviour took for one of the greatest of his sermons.

One of the most charming things about the Saviour's words was their simplicity. His meaning always was unmistakable. You may not be able to fathom all his meaning—you certainly will not—any more than you could take up in one small pail the flood of the Hudson River, but you never will be bewildered about his essential meaning. If any one who stood in the crowd listening to the Saviour felt no interest in what he said, the fault was not in the speaker but in the listener. If any one found that what the Saviour said was not clear, you may be sure it was not because the Lord Jesus had forgotten to use simple language. Rather it was because the listener had let his mind run away to other things, and was stupid and careless and inattentive, as some listeners are today.

Coleridge once said of the works of John Owen, the great Puritan preacher, that they were a "continent of mud." If you ever have tried to make your way through those sermons of John Owen's you know just what Coleridge meant. But no such criticism could have been made by anybody upon the addresses of Jesus Christ. His every word was as clear as the water of a mountain stream. The Directory of Worship of the Scotch Presbyterian Church requires that the minister should talk down to the level of the meanest of his hearers. Jesus Christ always did that. When he spoke he had his lowliest hearers in mind.

I remember that when I was a child we had an Aunt Mary. We loved to go to see her. For somehow whenever we visited her she happened to be baking cookies. And there was this peculiarity about Aunt Mary's disposition, that instead of putting those delicious cookies on the top shelf of the cupboard out of reach of everybody but herself, she always put them on the lowest shelf where the smallest of us could reach them. And that single trait of Aunt Mary's character made her memory dear to all her

nephews and nieces. And that was precisely what the Lord Jesus did. He put the royal feast of divine truth down on the lowest shelf within easy reach of the most untaught of his hearers. He put his great thoughts into such crystalline speech that the man with the poorest vision could see through them. And those who preach his gospel to-day can have no higher compliment paid them than to have the man who writes his name with difficulty, and the woman whose knowledge of literature is limited to a few nursery rhymes, and the little children who are yet in their primers, love to come to church to listen to the sermon.

The secret of the simplicity of the Saviour's teaching and of the interest it excited, is found in the fact that he took common objects with which every one is familiar, and invested them with new and eternal meaning. The teachers of his time said that God had spoken to men in days gone by. The Lord Jesus said that God had not ceased to speak. God's voice was in the word, but God's voice was in his works also to any one who had ears to hear. The Saviour found a Bible all about him that was legible to the

man who could not read, and that was accessible to the man who could not go to the synagogue. Oh that men would but think about things! Then the whole world would be a sanctuary, nature would be an inspired prophet, and every providential experience would tell us that since God is our Father his family will be well provided for, and since he is in control of things his universe is safe. Joseph Parker has well said,

> This is the very end of our spiritual education, to find God everywhere, never to open a rosebud without finding God, and never to see the day whitening the eastern sky without seeing the coming of the king's brightness.

Of all the words that the Lord Jesus spoke none is graven more deeply on the hearts of common men than this figure of the shepherd and the sheep. Every age and every land have their own ways of viewing God, but this is one of the sweet images that is dear to the people of all ages and all climes. And nineteen hundred years after these words were spoken, and in a land seven thousand miles from where they were spoken, where customs are different and the temperaments of men are different, we have only to allude

to the Saviour as the Good Shepherd to have a multitude of peaceful and heavenly thoughts descend upon their minds.

In the days when Christian men have been hard pressed, when persecution drove them from the streets of Rome down into the catacombs that were burrowed out like ratholes beneath the busy life of a vast city, this was the figure that gave the greatest solace to their hearts and that with rude outline they drew upon the walls of their dark, prison-like refuges—the figure of the Good Shepherd. And whenever since then Christ has been appealed to, to bless some work of mercy for the relief of suffering, or teaching the ignorant, or raising the fallen, the name that comes most naturally to the lips that made the petition has been the name of the Shepherd of his people, or the Good Shepherd of humanity. All the figures of speech by which the Lord Jesus presents himself are full of sympathy and tenderness, but the compassion that is in this name outstrips all the rest.

And yet it is the Bible alone that has invested the name and occupation of the shepherd with all their loveliness. The first

place in the Bible where the word shepherd is used is in the book of Genesis, where we are told that shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians. You remember, too, that when Samuel came to anoint one of the sons of Jesse to be king over Israel, the youngest boy who was attending the sheep was forgotten, and he was absent from the line-up. He was engaged in what was almost the lowest of the occupations, and so was deemed of little account. Probably there was only one place lower than a shepherd, and that was to be a swineherd. If you get away from the poetry and romance with which the Bible has clothed the shepherd, there is nothing especially attractive in his career. There is something that appeals to one's courage and pride in taming a horse and controlling him. But to tame and manage a sheep—what is there in that to stir one's ambition? But God took this calling that was an abomination in the eyes of the world, and a very lowly one in the eyes of his own people, and he redeemed it and made it glorious when he said, " I will be a shepherd to my people Israel."

But for all the shepherd's calling was so

despised, shepherds have made a tremendous contribution to the world's treasures of thought and emotion. Shepherds were the first astronomers. They used to lie on their backs and observe the stars. They made out the constellations and gave them their names. They knew the planets better than most of us do. To them the sky was like a marvelous piece of embroidery spread out, and they imagined the divine fingers working in the beams of light and the beads of stars, and they said through David, " When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him? " Shepherds were the popular musicians. They often played plaintive tunes as they led their sheep about, or while the sheep slept they whiled away the hours of the night with music. David, the prince of the shepherds, in his solitude, struck the harp-strings in such a way as to thrill all the ages since. Shepherds were apt to be botanists, and so we have David the shepherd saying, " The trees of the Lord are full of sap." They knew the birds and how they nested, and so David the shepherd says

again, "As for the stork, the fir trees are her house." Shepherds were the first poets. For if the winds or the stars or the streams on the mountainside or the flowers in the meadow had anything to say to the world, the shepherds were apt to be the first ones to hear it. The reflective life of the shepherd was apt to give him a deeper insight into things than men in active callings have. It was this same shepherd David, pasturing his flock on the Bethlehem hills, who discerned dimly a fact that you and I rejoice in, that there was to be born on those very hills a lamb that should bring hope to men—the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world—and he sang about that. And when he became an old man looking over his experience he thought of how the goodness of God had preserved him all the years, just as once he had tended and cared for his father's bleating sheep, and he sang that experience in the sweet Shepherd Psalm that even the children know by heart, and that has been the solace of many a fainting soul, and that will continue to solace troubled souls until time shall be no more.

In order to appreciate the beauty of this

figure as applied to the Saviour, we must put ourselves back into the midst of the shepherd life of his day. Sheepherding in this country, where the flock consists of many thousands, and the herders ride on horseback and drive the sheep before them and never lead the sheep, can give no idea of the tenderness and love that were conveyed by these words to the people who heard Jesus speak. In Eastern countries to this day the shepherd leads his flock. He does not drive, but simply calls the sheep to follow, using his voice or a musical pipe to call with. He goes before the flock. There is not a pitfall or a danger but he traverses it first. When any sheep is tired he lifts it gently and puts it on his shoulder, and the lambs he puts into a great pocket in his robe above the belt and close against his breast. If wolves or any other wild beasts attack he risks his life to save the lives of his sheep. And at night when he counts the flock, if any are missing, he goes out to seek the wanderers, and continues the search until the lost are found. In this way a very real friendship springs up between the shepherd and the sheep. In this country the relation is simply a commercial

one, the shepherd looking upon his sheep as worth so much a head. But in the East the shepherd and the sheep love each other. The shepherd feels the compassionate love of the protector, and the sheep feel the grateful love of the protected.

We cannot even hint at all the thoughts inspired by such a text as this. To get a few of them well into our hearts must suffice.

The first thing that is sure to occur to us in looking at a sheep is its complete dependence on its caretaker. Other creatures are able in a measure to take care of themselves. A dog will fight savagely when it is attacked. The lion has his teeth to defend himself, the serpent has his poisoned fangs, the hawk has his claws and beak. But a sheep cannot fight for its own protection. It has no means of defense. When the enemy comes the sheep can do nothing but tremble. It does not need a wolf to worry a sheep to death. A little dog can do it. The rabbit and the deer are fleet of foot so that they often can outrun the pursuing dogs, but sheep cannot escape by running. Snakes can hide in the grass, birds can take refuge among the lofty trees

when the hawk is after them, but a sheep does not know how to hide. And so it is with us poor sinners. We cannot successfully cope with our great adversary. We are not able to fight him. We cannot flee from him. We cannot hide from him. Just as the helpless sheep needs a shepherd, so we sinners need some one to save us from the enemy of our souls. Left alone we are lost. If no one mightier than ourselves protects us we are sure to perish.

This illustration of the shepherd emphasizes particularly *the minuteness of God's care.* Men grow skeptical about God loving each and every human being. And I do not wonder. There are so many people in the world. And yet against all odds, men in all ages have cherished the hope that God does love and care for each one of us, no matter where we live or who we are. Men instinctively pray as the dying robber did, "Lord, remember *me.*" We are like Bartimeus, who above the noise of tramping thousands of feet and the bedlam of a great crowd's voices, cried out, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on *me.*" When the Master calls himself the good shepherd he as-

sures us that such prayers are heard. The shepherd knows and cares for each sheep. How much argument there used to be in the old days as to whether providence was general or special. It is both. "He shall lead his flock like a shepherd"—there is general providence. "He knoweth his own sheep by name"—there is special providence.

When Margaret Fuller once solicited Charles Sumner's interest on behalf of a poor colored slave, he said that he had no time to look after individuals, he was trying to uplift a race. Margaret Fuller promptly responded that even the Almighty had not got on that far yet. And yet that answer is hardly a fair one. It takes a God to look after the single life and not lose sight of it in the great multitude. The mind of a man is not equal to so many details. You remember that Lincoln said that it was not the war that was killing him, but the question who should be postmaster at Pan Yan. Mortal man cannot possibly attend to so great a multitude of persons and things without distraction. But it is the mark of Godhead to be able to care for the race and for each person as well. There is no conflict between

general and special providence. Myron Read once spoke of the wind that was sent after the disobedient prophet Jonah. He said it had a special errand to Jonah, but it did other errands as well. It meant storm and disaster on the sea, but it meant health on the land. It came in at the windows of the sick, and pale faces turned gratefully to meet it. In the hot city men had been praying for a breath of air, and the wind that was sent specially after Jonah came cool from the sea, and fretful infants were soothed, and the sleep of the city's toilers was sweet that night. Mr. Beecher used to revel in the sunshine and look up, saying, "It is my sun." Each one of us may do that. The sun shines for all the world, but every smallest flower may lift up its head and say, "The sun shines for me." It is my sun. It is your sun. It is everybody's sun. And none of us feels miserable that it blesses all the rest of the world along with us. So the good shepherd cares assiduously for the whole flock, but he cares for each individual sheep as well.

It is difficult to realize that the Saviour has a separate acquaintance with each one

of the redeemed, since we are told that they make up a multitude that no man can even number. It is not possible for our minds to compass so many. When General Grant was a colonel he used to boast that he knew every man in his regiment by name. But he was not equal to that when he was in command of the whole army. Then he could think only of the generals who were working under him, and the individual soldiers were thenceforth lost in the mass. I have read that when Sherman's army was marching north from Savannah they passed along a little, unfrequented roadway in North Carolina. A woman stood in the doorway of her cabin, and as she saw regiment after regiment similar in appearance and dress pass by, she said in wonderment, "I reckon you'uns ain't all got names, has ye?" It seemed impossible to her that each man of that great army had a distinct and recognized identity. It would have seemed stranger if any one could have known them all by their names. Our poor human powers do not admit of that, but that is precisely the assurance that the Saviour gives us, that he knows us each by name. When God

wanted a child to make a prophet of him he called him by name—"Samuel, Samuel." When God wanted an apostle to the Gentiles he called him by name—"Saul, Saul." When Mary did not recognize her Lord in the garden he called her by name, and her eyes were opened at once to know him by the mention of her name. When Christ would rebuke the overbusy sister of Bethany he called her by name—"Martha, Martha." When he warned a disciple of coming trial he used his name—"Simon, Simon." So will he speak to us if we have the will to listen. And when he speaks, we shall be able to recognize his voice past possible mistake, just as the sheep in the Orient know their shepherd's voice infallibly.

There is something very singular about *the sheep's recognition of the shepherd's voice*. No closest imitation of the shepherd's voice seems able to deceive them. But there is an equal mystery about our recognition of one another's voices. Nobody can tell just how it is we tell one voice from another. Yet the baby knows its mother's voice. A mother knows infallibly the call of her child. Husbands and wives know

each other's voices. With our eyes shut we know our friends by their voices. Sitting among the people in prayer-meetings, I have frequently tested myself in the power of recognizing people by listening to their tones of voice. A man's recognition of the voice of somebody whom he did not see has been accepted as evidence in a court of law. And just so the voice of Jesus has its own quality that is recognizable. Any one who knows that voice cannot be deceived about it, though we cannot describe it any more than we can describe the glory of the sunshine, or the purling of a mountain brook, or the fragrance of flowers.

And *with the good shepherd this care of each sheep goes even to the length of the shepherd sacrificing his life.* In one of our Sunday-school papers lately was a sketch of the good Scotch shepherd whose name was Donald, but who was called by those who knew him best " Donnie, the shepherd." He had spent all his life among the sheep, and though he was growing old, his friends could not persuade him to give up caring for his flock. He knew every sheep by name, and loved them as well, and they loved him so

much that they readily followed him about. Old Donnie was especially careful of the lambs, and often he would carry the wee ones in his arms up the steep places and over the rough ones. One evening when the sheep were scattered all over the hillside, a terrible storm came up. When the old man saw it coming he went up to the top of the hill and called as loud as he could and gathered most of the sheep into the fold. When he counted them he found three of the lambs missing. Away he went over the hill after them. After a long search he found one and carried it back to the fold. The storm was increasing, the snow was drifting fast and filling up the roads, but away over the hill he went again until he found the second of the missing lambs, and putting it on his shoulder he carried it safely back. "Only one more," the shepherd said to himself, "only one more, and I'll have them all safe." It was dangerous for the old man to be out at all that night. He certainly should not have gone that last time, but he loved the missing lamb, so on and on he went in his search for it. And he never came back. The next morning they found him dead with

the cold and almost buried in the snow. But he had found the one lost lamb, and there it lay warm and living in the shelter of the old man's robe. He had, like the great Good Shepherd, given his life for the one sheep.

To be sure *the shepherd exercises discipline*. He dare not always be tender and indulgent. Sometimes when a sheep is persistently wayward, and refuses to obey the shepherd's call, and flees when he approaches, then the shepherd takes his sling and stone, and making sure his aim, he whirls the sling and hurls the stone and maims the sheep, so that unable longer to run away he may go and take it in his arms, and bring it back from its place of danger to a place of safety.

And then there was the crook that the shepherd carried. He used it sometimes as a staff to help himself as he walked. He used it, too, to help the sheep. Often a sheep was lifted over a hard place by it. But very often the crook was used for reproof. When a sheep was wandering away the crook was thrown about its neck and it was drawn back. All we, like sheep, have gone astray, and our Lord's crook is kept pretty

busy pulling us back. Here is a man caught by the mania for money-making. He is fast losing his sense of dependence on God. He feels that he can manage his own affairs and choose his own ways. Then suddenly his business fortunes fail. What is the trouble? Is God setting himself against him? Oh no, God is caring for his child. He knows the danger and he has simply thrown the shepherd's crook about his sheep's neck and drawn him back to safety. Here is a young man who has had a deep draught of the world's pleasures. He likes it. He would live in the midst of it always. He breaks away from restraint. He breaks down in health. He loses his business position. His cares are multiplied until he feels that he cannot stand up under them. What is the matter? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Oh no, he never was more so. He has just thrown his crook about the neck of another wayward sheep of his and pulled him away from what would be fatal to him. Here is a man who has no sympathy with the sick or the suffering. He never has an ache or a pain himself. He thinks such things in others simply an illusion, things of the imag-

ination. He is impatient and intolerant of all who are ill. But after awhile his own health is shattered. Then he sees where he was wrong and bitterly regrets it. And so the good shepherd has thrown about one more of his sheep the crook of his discipline, and drawn him back from unloveliness of disposition to compassionateness of heart. Here is a happy home; father and mother and three children are dwelling in as much bliss as can be found anywhere on earth. But the father does not acknowledge any obligation to his Lord. He never bows before the heavenly Father as the giver of all good things. Then one of the children, the brightest of them all, fades away and dies, and the father's heart is broken. He cannot understand it. He cries out, "Has God cast me off?" Oh no, anything but that. He has merely prevented the man throwing himself away. The great Shepherd has simply put his crook about him and solicitously and affectionately drawn him back from forgetfulness of God to trust in him. Oh what blessings our troubles are! His rod and his staff, they comfort us even while they rebuke us. Put all the troubles of your life to-

gether, and all the joys of your life together, and I venture to say that your troubles have enriched you far beyond your joys.

I must not close without saying that when Christ says, "I am the good shepherd," he is assuring us that *our every want will be met.* That was the triumphant strain that David raised, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." And what David found in his good Shepherd, we find in ours, for he is the same yesterday, today, and forever. A good Christian woman sat down in her home one day and made out a list of the needs that David found satisfied in his Lord, and then she set over against them some of the promises of Christ to us. It makes a wonderful showing. Here is what David says: "I shall not lack rest, for he maketh me to lie down in green pastures. I shall not lack drink; he leadeth me beside still waters. I shall not lack forgiveness; he restoreth my soul. I shall not lack guidance; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness. I shall not lack companionship; though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for thou art with me. I

shall not lack comfort; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. I shall not lack food; thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. I shall not lack joy; thou anointest my head with oil. I shall not lack anything; my cup runneth over. I shall not lack anything in this life; surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. I shall not lack anything in the life to come; I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

That is what David found in his great Shepherd. Now see how every point of that is fulfilled in Christ. I shall not want rest—"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." I shall not want drink—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." I shall not want forgiveness—"The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." I shall not want guidance—"I am the way, the truth, and the life." I shall not want companionship—"Lo, I am with you alway." I shall not want comfort—"The Father shall give you another Comforter." I shall not want food—"I am the bread of life. He that eateth of me shall never hun-

ger." I shall not want joy—"That my joy may be in you, and your joy may be full." I shall not want anything—"If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." I shall not want anything in this life—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." I shall not lack anything in eternity—"I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am there ye may be also."

Surely in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures forevermore. May we all avail ourselves of the Good Shepherd's care.

X

THE MESSAGE OF THE WORMS

And God made . . . everything that creepeth upon the earth after his kind; and God saw that it was good.

—*Genesis 1: 25.*

THE MESSAGE OF THE WORMS

With almost every boy, the day after he goes to the country for his summer vacation, the thought is to go afishing. And with that comes the search for worms for bait. All boys have dug for worms. They have gone out to the garden when night has fallen, and the "night-walkers" are strewn about on the top of the ground, looking in the twilight like so many twigs scattered about, and they have wondered how at the slightest footfall as the seeker approaches every last twig has disappeared. With a marvelous suddenness every worm has gone back into its hole, and left the ground as bare as the back of your hand. It takes a very stealthy approach and skilful snatching of the worms to get the number necessary for a day's sport. The worm is one of the humblest of God's creatures, one very lightly esteemed, and yet it is very widely distributed. It is found practically everywhere throughout the world.

So universally known as it has been, the worm has come to be a symbol of the insig-

nificant. When Cowper sought something that would represent the least infraction of the humane spirit, and yet would be great enough an offense to be a barrier to friendly relations, he thought of a man heedlessly hurting a worm. He said

> I would not enter on my list of friends,
> (Though graced with polished manners and fine sense,
> Yet wanting sensibility) the man
> Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.

And Tennyson finds in the worm an illustration of how carefully the affairs of the universe are administered when he insists that even a worm is not sacrificed carelessly, but that from its sacrifice some good comes to somebody. How confident his faith is as he says that he trusts,

> That not a worm is cloven in vain,
> That not a moth with vain desire
> Is shriveled in a fruitless fire,
> Or but subserves another's gain.

From being insignificant the worm has come to be an object of contempt, and its name is used as a term of contempt. Very few feel that degree of interest in such creatures as the little daughter of Charles Kingsley who

came running in to him from the garden with a caterpillar enclosed in her tiny fist and shouting to him "Oh, daddy, look at this dear, delightful worm." Nor have they the sense of kinship to them felt by an eccentric old lady who once owned a house that afterward Henry W. Longfellow occupied. The place was a scene of devastation wrought by caterpillars. Every leaf had been devoured from the trees and the bushes, and the brown, bare, denuded tract of ground about the house was the center from which the "varmints" made forays on all the gardens and lawns thereabouts. She would not allow any of the caterpillars to be killed. As Saint Francis called his donkey his "little brother," so she with her misguided piety called the crawling creatures that made her home a blotch on the face of nature "our fellow worms." Indeed so odious have worms been to many thinkers that their name has been applied to God's arch-enemy. Dante called Lucifer a worm, and Milton, following suit, speaks of Satan as a worm. The New Testament speaks of Gehenna, the place of punishment for the wicked, as a place "where their worm dieth

not, and their fire is not quenched"; while Luke describes the death of Herod, the persecutor of the Christians, as peculiarly loathsome because he was "eaten of worms." The Puritans, in their habit of self-abasement, have spoken of themselves as "miserable worms of the earth." And this thought appears again and again in the old hymnals. Faber says,

> My God, how wonderful thou art,
> What worthless worms are we!

And in one of the best-known hymns in the English language the same sense of the abject condition of the sinner appears:

> Alas, and did my Saviour bleed,
> And did my Sovereign die!
> Would he devote that sacred head
> For such a worm as I?

Such hymns are now out of date. They are being eliminated from our hymn-books. Such deep humility, that amounts to self-loathing, is not in accord with the spirit of this age of ours, so vain and full of conceit as it is. The humility exhibited by the godly men of the past is called abjectness by many of the proud leaders of today. But the

Scriptures show us the seraphim and the cherubim falling down before God and covering their faces before him and exhibiting every sign of doing obeisance. No flesh can glory in his presence. When we see God or feel ourselves in his presence our sense of our own importance dies, and we actually feel that we are worms in his sight.

Everywhere that the worm has been known, and it has been known everywhere, it has been looked upon as preeminently the destroyer. It devours our bodies. "After my skin, worms destroy this body," says Job. Men always have thought of worms infesting the grave. That we still think so lends much of the horror to death. It has grim irony in it that no matter how much power a man acquires, at last he is conquered by the slow-moving, powerless worm. The brilliant Lord Byron said:

> My life is in the sere, the yellow leaf;
> The flowers and fruits of life are gone;
> The worm, the canker, and the grief
> Are mine alone.

The Talmud represents Solomon, the wisest and most magnificent of the Jewish kings,

as leaning on his staff after his death. He still seemed to be alive. His laborers supposed that he was watching them at their work. But the worms gnawing at the end of the staff he leaned upon, soon brought him low. Victor Hugo, in his poem entitled "The Epic of the Worm," describes the ravages of time as though it were an all-devouring worm. Nothing is safe from its attacks, the fruit on our trees, the love in our hearts, the glory of our achievements, and even the stars glowing in the skies. All are passing away. Time is the worm that consumes them all. He says:

Since the star flames, man would be wrong to teach
That the grave's worm cannot such glory reach;
Naught real is, save me.
Within the blue as 'neath the marble slab I lie,
I bite at once the star within the sky,
The apple on the tree;
To gnaw yon star is not more tough to me
Than hanging grapes on vines of Sicily;
I clip the rays that fall;
Eternity yields not to splendors brave.
Fly, ant, all creatures die, and naught can save
The constellations all.

So that this lowliest of created beings, weak indeed, having no teeth to attack an enemy,

no armor to protect itself, no feet to hurry away, no eyes to see its whereabouts, no ears to hear of an enemy's approach, is yet shown to be victor over all things at the end. Weakest of all, its power transcends all. No wonder that Charles Darwin, who whether we agree with his conclusions or not, has shaped the thinking of our day more than any other man, was fascinated by the earthworm. Acknowledged to be the greatest scientist of our day, and having given the best years of his life to the study of man, he gave his last days to the study of earthworms—the highest and the lowest of God's creatures—and finding the one as wonderful as the other. Because the worm is a nocturnal creature, Darwin often lay beside it on the ground all night long observing its habits. And odd as it may seem there was as much dignity in the task he set himself to as if he had taken a telescope and swept the heavens in a study of the stars.

One of the things Darwin taught us about the worms is that though they are among the lowliest creatures in the world *they have done the greatest work in making this earth fit to be the dwelling-place of man.* As an

organism they have a very limited equipment. But by a diligent and unremitting use of what they have, they have given us the soil that enables the earth to put forth its grasses and its trees, which make nature a veritable garden of the Lord for beauty, and which yield seed for the sower and bread for the eater.

The weather does its part in reducing the rocks. The cold freezes them. The sun heats them. The glaciers slip over them, and grind them to powder and scratch them. The rivers wash down the débris into the valleys. And then this helpless creature which you can easily crush between your finger and your thumb, gets to work. It takes the granite dust by suction into its body, and when it has extracted what nourishment it needs from it, it exudes the rest as soil. And it has gone on doing this until the wide world around we have a mold of soft earth, on which man can grow all that he needs for the sustenance of himself and his cattle, for building his homes and for their adornment. This work of the making of the earth's soil is fundamental to all else that is done in the world. Without it life if

placed here could not long be sustained. It was a task of tremendous magnitude, to cover the earth's surface with fertile soil, to a sufficient depth to bear the forests and the gardens of the world. But toiling steadily through uncounted years the despised worm has done it. Probably there is no other creature to which man is so indebted for the comfort of his life as to this lowly creature, the worm. It is so remarkable a work, and it has been done so unerringly that we need have no fear of contradiction when we call it a work of providence. This is one of the cases where we can say that God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the mighty. The worm has worked so incessantly at its appointed task, that one cannot escape the conclusion that it has worked according to a program that God has laid down. God could say of the worm toiling for others, during so many years, as he said of Cyrus, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." If the lower creatures were to apply for sainthood, from what I know of all of them I should have less hesitation in endorsing the application of the worm than any other. Without any deviation, it

does its task of serving others, because it is its nature to do it, finding its reward for the service in being permitted to do more service.

And in saying all this we do not find it necessary to invest the worm with any power that it has not got. Shelley, who was himself an unbeliever, and at times a violent one, speaks as though *the worm was a conscious worshiper of God.* It may be only poetic license, but it goes far in what it says, and comes from one who is not given to have anything worship God. Here is what he says:

> The spirit of the worm within the sod
> In love and worship blends itself with God.

And Robert Browning, attributing to the worm the same power of loving, says,

> The loving worm within its sod
> Were diviner than a loveless god
> Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.

We would agree with Emerson that the universe is so made and operated that a worm's rights would not be disregarded:

> Fear not, then, thou child infirm,
> There's no god dare wrong a worm.

Yet there is no need of supposing that the worm has the most hazy ambition to be a man. Emerson says:

> A subtle chain of countless rings
> The next unto the farthest brings;
> The eye reads omens where it goes,
> And speaks all languages the rose;
> And, striving to be man, the worm
> Mounts through all the spires of form.

This, too, is poetry. The rose no more speaks really than the worm aspires. There is nowhere any sign in nature that there is an urge in the worm that is pushing it manward. There never was in all the ages that have elapsed since worms appeared on the earth, any worm that was anything else than a worm, and there never will be. Indeed that is the very point we wish to make. The worm goes on doing its appointed task, without any sign of resenting it. We are told that the worm could have done better for itself by turning aside from its diet of crushed rock and taking to devouring vegetation only. Doubtless there have been reasons in nature apart from its long-acquired habit, why it has adhered to its unattractive regimen. We are concerned only with the

fact that in spite of enticing invitations to turn aside from its prescribed program of service it has kept steadily on doing its needed work for all the rest of animate creation.

In that is found my sufficient reason for voting for *the worm as my candidate for sainthood in the animal world.* When the word "saint" is pronounced, most people think of folks lean enough and with pale faces, and haloes about their heads, who stand apart very still and commune with God and wish they were not alive. But that is not the Bible's notion of saintliness. Bible saints are usually commonplace people, and are engaged in very commonplace tasks. They are people who make no boast of their own goodness, but who give themselves every day to serving others. They are the saints whom I adore. There are a good many of them in the world if you only know where to look for them. They are not found in the pope's list. The Roman Catholic Church cannot canonize a man until he has been dead for a hundred years. You will not find them mentioned in any church calendar. You will find them in many a kitchen. There

are more of them in the nursery. They are in many a widow's home. There are saints in many shops and factories. There are many of them in poverty and uneducated.

Henry Ward Beecher told of a poor English woman, without home or friends or means or strength, who wandered about the streets of Brooklyn, and was taken by a poor woman into her own home for the night. She was kept there. The poor hostess had to work hard to get her daily bread, and yet she took care of this helpless stranger almost as if she was her own mother, though there was not a drop of blood relation between them except through the blood of Christ. She toiled for her and nourished her and clothed her in her old age, and at last after six years the old wanderer passed away. Now tell me, where are your saints if this woman is not one of them, as through years, buried from the sight of men, she served that needy one and shared her little all with her.

I knew of another, a ruddy old maid, who lived with her married sister and who because her sister was not robust took on herself the burden of the household work, and

cared for the children as though they were her own, giving herself in exhausting labor to lighten her sister's cares. She did that through twenty years until the children were grown up. She toiled underground and self-forgetfully for others. She was a busy bustling saint, to be sure, with her sleeves rolled up over her elbows. She was none of your ethereal beings with face turned skyward, and eyes rolled up, but she was a saint none the less. People said of her: "Oh she is a very plain person; she lives with her sister and does the work. She is very good doubtless, but there is nothing particularly interesting about her." That, no doubt, was the way she looked to most people. She was not conspicuous for any talent, but simply toiled her life out unceasingly for the sake of others.

To be sure *God has not hedged us about with laws that we are obliged to obey as he has the worm.* He has ordered for us circumstances that it is not always possible for us to alter, but he has not made slaves of our wills. Everywhere in Scripture it is assumed that men choose good or evil according to their own wishes. A man's own will

may be weak but God has provided for the reenforcement of his will. God's power is at his service. When he is beset by the devil he can call upon God, and God will not fail him. Any soul that wishes to carry out God's program of life for him, will find that even in the worst circumstances God gives him help enough if he chooses to make use of it. Professor Huxley recognized that men were free to do good or evil according to their own choice. Part of his freedom he was willing to give up. He said:

> I protest that if some great power would agree to make me always think of what is true and do what is right, on condition of my being turned into a sort of a clock and wound up every morning, I should instantly close with the offer. The only freedom I care about is the freedom to do right. The freedom to do wrong I am ready to part with on the cheapest terms to any one that will take it off me.

Instead of blaming his Maker for enslaving his will Professor Huxley was disposed to complain because his will was left free. The only freedom he wanted was the freedom to follow out of necessity the program of life God had prescribed for him. But that fixed

bias of the will toward what it is right for us to do can come to us only by unfailing choice of the thing that is right. It becomes thus a habit of life in which we do not falter.

With *the worm regarded as the universal destroyer,* the man who puts his trust in God is yet *able to bid defiance to it,* and to sound out his exultant note of victory over it. Job, though an ideal man in his life, was beset by many a trouble. He was stripped of his property, bereft of his children, fell sick himself of a loathsome disease, was so discouraged that he cursed the day he was born. The friends and dear ones who should have stood by him, were worse than useless. His wife bade him curse God and die. His friends, one after another, charged him with secret sin for which his troubles had come upon him as a punishment, and they urged him to make a clean breast of his hidden wickedness. Job was conscious of his integrity; he had no confession to make; he persisted in his faith in God; he bore his troubles with patience and with such equanimity as he could command; at the climax of his trial he declared that though God should slay him he would trust in him; and

that though after his death worms should destroy his body, yet they could not touch his soul; his cause was in the hands of one who would take care of him, would declare him guiltless of the charges made against him, and would show him to have been righteous. There is nowhere in literature a sublimer sight than the godly man Job, afflicted as few men have been in all the world's history, bewildered by his sufferings, not knowing the reasons for them and yet believing there was a reason, with his friends suspicious of him, and his wife impatient with him, exhausted in body and anguished in mind and about to die, yet positively declaring his faith in the justice and goodness of God as unshaken, and willing to leave himself in that God's hands to justify him before his people. "I know that my vindicator liveth," he says, "and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." We feel that a man who, against all odds, hopes on, and laughs at threatening destruction, deserves

immortality. He is himself a good argument for believing in another life after this. A mind so sure, a character so stedfast, a heart so pure, was not made to be thrown away. Another life is necessary as the fulfilment of this. So John Fiske, the foremost representative, in America, of the Spencerian philosophy, said in his little book on *The Destiny of Man,*

> I believe in the immortality of the soul, not in the sense in which I accept demonstrable truths of science, but as a supreme act of faith in the reasonableness of God's work.

There is only one surer word than this, and that is the assurance of God's Son who "brought life and immortality to light through his gospel," who submitted to death himself and thus conquered the grave, and has made it plain to us that because he lives we shall live also, and who enables us to shout out our exultation in the face of the great destroyer: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

XI

THE MESSAGE OF SALT

Ye are the salt of the earth.—Matthew 5: 13.

THE MESSAGE OF SALT

THE Lord Jesus had his own way of looking at things and of talking about them. He got his finest similes from the commonest objects. His illustrations were as fresh as the dew that still sparkled on the lily which he preserved in one of his sermons. His instruction was as instinct with life as the hen that he spoke of was eager to give her brood the protection of her wings. He did not weigh down his addresses by quotations from the classics. He did not draw his lessons from far-off corners of creation. He gave an eloquent tongue to the things that are all about us. He dignified the bread and water that are on the tables of the poorest by making them the chief symbols of himself. The candle and the broom of the housekeeper, the birds that dart through the air, the flowers that grow by the roadside, the swine spurning the jewel because it was not something they could eat, the tree and its fruit, the sand and the rock as rival founda-

tions for a building—these were the texts from which he preached eternal truths.

A class of children was once asked what part of the Bible they liked best, and one of them said, "I like the *likes* best." And because the Lord Jesus knew that, and wished to reach minds that were as simple as those of children, he strewed these "likes" all through his sermons as he said, "The kingdom of heaven is *like* unto a man which sowed good seed in his field"—it is "*like* unto a grain of mustard seed"—it is "*like* a treasure hid in a field"—it is "*like* a merchant seeking goodly pearls"—it is "*like* a net cast into a sea"—it is "*like* yeast that a woman mixed with her flour"—and so on. In that same fashion at the close of one of his sermons as he looked on his disciples standing about him and yearned to tell them how important a place they were to hold in the world, and how necessary a service they were to render their fellow men, he took an article that has its place in palace and hovel alike and that gives quality to every morsel of food that passes our lips, and he said, "You are like that." He held up before the minds of those plain men, who had had little

chance for culture, a crystal of common salt and said, "You are the salt of the earth."

Salt is so common and cheap a thing among us that we do not appreciate how high a compliment the Saviour paid his disciples when he said to them, "You are the salt of the earth." We say of a man who is idle and worthless, that he is not worth his salt, as though nothing could be worth less than that. But we must not let the commonness and abundance of salt among us make us forget its tremendous value, any more than we let the abundance of the sunlight make us depreciate that, or the streams of living water that we have almost everywhere in America, lead us to undervalue that. In the frigid zones where they have a night six months long, men know the value of the light which is so common among us that we take it as a matter of course. In the Sahara of Africa and in the arid plains of our own West people know best the value of the water that is so plentiful and so little esteemed among us. And in lands where there is no deposit of salt and where the people dwell far from the sea, they know the value of the salt which we think of no value

at all. There are places in the world where there is a malady that is described as salt starvation, and it is said to be more painful than hunger and thirst. If you eat too much salt, you sicken. If you are shut off from salt altogether you come to physical distress that is worse still. One of our African missionaries has told us of some natives who walked between fifty and sixty miles to his cabin in search of salt. They had broken out in ulcers, and when they reached the mission house they begged in piteous tones not for bread, or water, or medicine, but for salt, simply salt.

The world has always set a tremendous value upon salt. Old Homer called salt "divine." Plato said it was a substance "dear to the gods." Any nation that had a good supply of salt was counted rich. A salt-spring used to be looked upon as a special mark of God's favor to the people among whom it was found. The ancient Germans fought for the possession of a salt-spring, and they believed that salt in the soil made any district sacred and rendered it a place where prayer was readily heard. Liebig, the famous chemist, has told us that

in several parts of Africa men have been sold for salt. Among the Gallas, on the coast of Sierra Leone, a brother would sell his sister, a husband his wife, and a parent his child for salt. In Abyssinia and in Tibet cakes of salt were used for money. Among almost all peoples salt was mingled with their sacrifices. This was as true of the Jews as it was of the Greeks and Romans. Salt has always been looked upon as practically a necessity of life. Great paths were made across the Western prairies by the deer and buffalo going to and coming from the "salt-licks." It may be that man's oldest trade-routes were made for the traffic in salt. One of the oldest roads in Italy is the Via Salaria, by which the product of the salt pans of Ostia was carried up into the country of the Sabines. Down to the present day the caravan trade of some parts of the East is largely a trade in salt.

The Bible speaks of "a covenant of salt," and among the ancients, and many of the Oriental peoples still, any meal that included salt had a sacred character, and created a bond of piety and friendship between the partakers of it. In the tent of the warlike

Arabs there is always a dish of salt, and if the traveler can get to it and put a pinch of it into his mouth, he is safe, for that puts a covenant of salt between him and the owner of the tent. When the Arabs undertook to make any serious covenant they used to sprinkle salt upon a sword, and then they partook of the salt, and the understanding was that nothing ever should be allowed to violate that covenant. Men like the Arabs, who can trifle with language, and who have a subtlety of mind that can make distinctions where other intelligences fail to perceive any differences, would hold themselves bound by that covenant of salt never to break their agreement. And so when you and I pass between us the invitation "Come and eat salt with us" we are commemorating in our everyday speech one of the most sacred rites of other peoples, and of our own far-distant ancestors.

The first thing we think of concerning salt is that *it is a great perservative*. It is the greatest natural preventive of putrefaction. It is the greatest preserver of foods that we have. Men have tried sugar in preserving foods, and smoke, and air-tight jars,

but none of them has been more widely used than common salt. Its use is universal. Every housewife uses it, and she uses it constantly. It is almost as common as the use of water. The Lord Jesus says plainly that this is part of the duty his people are to fulfil in the world. They are to be in the midst of the world's life and to preserve it from decay. The Lord Jesus was not a recluse. He gave no endorsement to the notion that you must withdraw from the world's people in order to become holy. He said rather that if you are holy you should be in touch with the world. One of the Saviour's last petitions was that the Father should not take his disciples out of the world but should keep them while they are in the world. We are not simply to be pure, but to purify others. The only way salt can possibly purify is by being rubbed into the corrupted thing. So we, full of the grace of Jesus Christ, are to be rubbed into the rotting mass of the world's life to sweeten it, to arrest decay, to stay corruption, and to save it from falling to pieces from its own vices.

So it has operated all through Christian history. In olden times it used to be said

that those who were possessed with demons could not play their tricks in the presence of a good man. The presence of a good man prevented the devil having elbow-room to work. Wickedness is ashamed before a man of God just as criminals skulk out of sight when the full light of a lantern is turned upon them. Ever since the Lord Jesus brought his grace to men the level of manhood has been slowly rising. Virtues that were despised then, such as humility and meekness and self-denial, are esteemed now. There is not a social relation among men that has not been refined by His influence. Fathers once were despots over their children; now the relation is one of affection. Husbands once tyrannized over their wives; now they stand equal before God and men. Men once held their fellow men in serfdom; now the time is in sight that Robert Burns sang about when men the world over would brothers be. Once the sick were turned adrift, now they are tenderly cared for. Once in many parts of the world the aged were buried alive, now they are ministered to with undying affection. Vices that in classical Greece were quite reputable, are

now deemed so utterly vile that they are unmentionable. And traits that were deemed so good that they were impossible now are commonplace. And all this beneficent change in society is due to Christian influence.

We must not pass this part of the subject without saying that, however great the corruption of the world, there is a supply of the salt of divine grace in God's people that is ample for all needs. God has strewn salt all over the earth's surface. Russia seems underlaid with salt. England and Italy have inexhaustible resources. The far north of Norway and Sweden that is white with snow above ground, is white with salt beneath the ground. Austria has mines that are miles and miles in length, yielding nearly a million tons annually. One bed of salt in Austria is estimated to be twenty miles broad, five hundred miles long, and twelve hundred feet thick. We live in a land that produces fourteen millions of bushels of it annually, and wherever you live you can take a train and in a few hours reach a salt-mine or salt-spring. We have so much of it that there is no more likelihood of its exhaustion than

there is of the sun's heat giving out. So the grace of God ministered through his people is abundant. It is for all lands, for all ages, for all conditions. There is pardon in him for the worst sin, and comfort for the sharpest suffering.

The other use to which we put salt is that of *a seasoner*. We use salt even more to make things savory than to preserve them. Most food is utterly stale and flat unless prepared for the palate by being seasoned with salt. And as salt gives relish to food, so grace gives zest and flavor to life. In any community the life of the people would be utterly insipid and worthless except as it is made pungent and vigorous by the gracious spirit of God's people.

A king asked his three daughters how much they loved him. One said that she loved him more than all the gold in the world. Another said that all the silver in the world would not compare with him in value. The youngest said that she loved him more than she loved salt. The king was not pleased with what she said. He replied that he did not think salt was very palatable. But his cook overhearing the remark put no

salt in anything that he had for breakfast the next morning, and the meal was so insipid that the king could not eat it. Then he understood what his daughter meant. She loved him so well that nothing was good without him. The life that any one of us has to lead day by day would be tasteless and loathsome if we had not the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to impart freshness and flavor to it. We hear a great deal from young people about their wishing to see life. We have proverbs that assure us there is a "spice in wickedness." It is refreshing to have this higher than human authority for the fact that goodness has a relish all its own. And it is a great honor to be called as we are to impart this unwonted zest to life. The Saviour gives us full assurance that if we live a truly Christian life in the midst of men, we shall make things attractive and relishable to those whose tastes are now altogether worldly. When some one told Father Taylor of the Seamen's Bethel in Boston that Emerson would surely go to hell, the old man quietly replied, "Well, if he does, he will turn emigration that way." A life of sweetness and gentleness and

purity, having the savor of the life of Jesus Christ, breathing the atmosphere of heaven, is sure to draw men in its direction.

There are some things we cannot do. Christ never said to his people, for example, that they are to be the bread or the water of life. Those symbols he reserved for himself alone. Only he can meet the deepest needs of the human soul. But though we cannot be bread to men as Christ can, we may be salt to the bread. We can commend it to the hungry. Our lives should be so spicy with the graces of heaven that men of the world who come into touch with us shall have their spiritual appetites aroused. It is our business as "the salt of the earth" to give a savory pungency and power to the truth of the gospel. And if men, as they taste of our conversation and conduct in social life, in business life, in political life, find it pleasant and refreshing and helpful, they will easily be won to feed themselves on him who is the bread of life.

And we ought to notice that *the beneficent influence of the Christian* as he sweetens and purifies life all about him *is a silent thing.* It is unobtrusive. We do not realize what

is being done, or that anything is being done. Christian character does its work in the world just as *salt acts secretly and stealthily.* We can see none of the processes. We see only the results as by and by they are attained. Most people are more concerned about the noise they make in the world than about the work they do. They feel that they must make their voices heard above the din of life or they will remain in obscurity and die unknown. But it does not need noise to make one's life beautiful and noble and mighty as well. Most of God's best ministries are silent. How silently the sunbeams fall upon the fields and gardens, and yet what life and beauty they bring forth in the springtime! How silently the flowers bloom, and yet what brightness is theirs and what fragrance they exhale! How silently God meets all our needs. He gives his blessings while we sleep. He makes no ado whatsoever, and yet in ten thousand ways he is constantly ministering to our wants. And who does not remember how noiseless the life of our Lord was on earth. He did not strive nor cry in the streets. But the power that went forth from him is pulsing through all

lands today, in millions of hearts on earth and in heaven. When Florence Nightingale had gone about like an angel of mercy among the wounded soldiers in the Crimea, she shunned publicity. She preferred to do her work unnoticed of men. She refused to have her picture taken, though thousands begged it. For she said she wished to drop out of sight and be forgotten that Christ alone might be remembered as the author of the blessings her hands had ministered. So on one of the early Christian monuments in Rome there is an epitaph of a young military officer who said that he deemed himself to have lived long enough since he had the opportunity to shed his blood for Christ.

Now over against the possibility of doing such beneficent work for Christ in a world that so much needs it, Christ sets this other possibility of a man having the power to do it and losing the power. He says that *the salt may lose its savor*. Christians may lose the quality that distinguishes them from the people of the world, and with that goes all power to make men better. Sometimes really it seems to be the aim of Christian people to reduce themselves to likeness to the

world and its people. So that away back in Paul's time even, he had to send out the warning, " Be not conformed to this world." Sometimes I think there is nothing men and women are more afraid of than of being odd. But what would have become of the world if Jesus Christ had been afraid of being odd. Suppose Paul had been terrified at the thought of being odd. How the Reformation would have been wrecked and the liberty that came to the world through it, have been turned back if the oddities of Martin Luther had not persisted through that long, hard struggle! Suppose the Puritans had yielded their principles when they were derided and caricatured. Suppose Roger Williams had considered his own comfort and conformed to the wishes of his adversaries when he was driven out into the wilderness, and wandered for fourteen weeks in a bitter season, not knowing what bed or bread did mean. I sometimes fear that many of us get a great deal more of worldliness from other men than other men get saltiness of divine grace from us. Let us remember this, that if we are not so full of divine grace that we can salt and preserve

the world, then the world's rottenness will lay hold of us and corrupt us.

Christ goes further and says that when a man is reduced to such likeness to the world that he has not power to influence it for good, he is fit for nothing but to be cast out as refuse. *Savorless salt is thrown out on the roads in the East.* Not long ago I heard a man criticising Christ for speaking of salt losing its savor. He said that Christ made a mistake; that salt could not lose its savor; that if the savor was gone the salt was gone. That is true. Christ understood that. He was portraying the most complete obliteration of oneself possible. It was not simply the loss of a quality but the utter annihilation of everything that was worth while in one's self. The young critic fell into his misunderstanding because he had in mind the refined salt that we have on our tables. When its saltness is gone there is literally nothing left. But Christ was speaking of what he had observed and what all who listened that day had observed as well. The salt of our Lord's land was impure. When it was gathered there was much earth mixed with it, and when it deliquesced or when it

deteriorated, as it did by being stored in cabins that had an earthen floor, it became insipid and useless. In that condition nobody wanted it. It was worse than useless. It made the ground where it was thrown barren so that people would not put it on their gardens, and they did not want it anywhere about their yards. So they carefully swept it up and threw it out on the road to be trampled under foot. That was all it was fit for. It was unable to do the one thing that it was intended to do, and so it was cast out, and trampled under foot of every passer-by.

That is a sorry fate. The Saviour says it may happen to men as well as to salt. If our lives lack the power to sweeten and preserve the life of the world from corruption; if we lack the power to make life good and pleasant and agreeable and spicy to those about us, we are worthless. If we are Christians we ought to have this power. If we have no such power we are like savorless salt. But in our case our power may be renewed. It was Jesus Christ who gave us our savor at first. And he can give us again that strange saintliness that rebukes iniquity and keeps it in check and works for the

purifying of the world. May his power so come into us that in the beauty of our characters, and the purity of our lives, and the elevation of our spirits we may witness to the world that we have been with Christ, and may in some measure at least check the decay of the world.

XII

THE END OF THE SUMMER

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

—*Jeremiah 8: 20.*

THE END OF THE SUMMER

For twenty-five years in succession my old pastor in Philadelphia took this verse as a text for the first sermon he preached to his people on his return from vacation. It was the same text year after year; the same lessons were drawn from the text though expressed in somewhat different words. But on account of their appropriateness to the season the truths were not monotonous even to those who heard all of the twenty-five discourses.

If at the end of the vacation season it is said to you once, it will be said a score of times, "Well, the summer is ended." And for one person who has said it, a hundred think it. It is the uppermost thought in the minds of millions of people scattered all over our land in the early part of September. The lengthening nights and the shortening days remind us of it. The congestion of baggage at railroad station and steamship dock reminds us of it. The prevailing yellow of the autumn flowers that now fill the

fields, here and there a maple branch blanching or blushing in anticipation of the coming of cold weather, and the brilliant red of the sumac that lines many of the roads remind us of the same thing. The choir of nature is not the same today that it was three months ago. Now the regular choir of autumn is chirping and harping in the fields like jolly fiddlers at a revel, and this is the theme of their song, "The summer is ended." People who live in the country know how to interpret their song. And there is a clearness in the atmosphere and a tonic chill both morning and evening that impress the same message. The millions of children all over our land as they resume their studies seem to hear this refrain ringing in all the schools, "The summer is ended." And business and professional men girding themselves for the work of the cooler months are murmuring to themselves, "The summer is ended."

Now if we use this change of season as the Bible would prompt us to do, we shall make it a text from which to draw some helpful lessons. When Christ spoke to the people he always used the natural objects

that his hearers were most familiar with to illustrate and enforce eternal truth. When he spoke to fishermen he said, "The gospel is a net let down into the sea." When he spoke to farmers he said, "Behold a sower went forth to sow, and some of the seed fell on good ground, and some on thorny ground." When he spoke to people familiar with shepherd life, he told the story of the lost sheep, how the shepherd went into the wilderness and found it and brought it home to the fold. So also the prophets and the apostles talked in a plain way with simple natural figures which all the people understood. David and John, Isaiah and Paul, found in country life a source of frequent illustration. Amos and Hosea, Joel and Malachi, have pointed their prophecies with allusions to threshing-floors, sheaf-laden carts, grasshoppers, new-mown fields, orchards, and vineyards. And here in our text the weeping prophet Jeremiah makes the end of the summer represent the end of Israel's chance of mercy. As we study the text may it mean as much to us as it must have meant to those who first heard it.

I suppose that the first lesson of the text

is that *opportunities lost do not return.* The words of this verse sound like the knell of a soul. "The harvest is past"; then no matter what we may do we cannot increase it. The opportunities of life are measured out to us. We are not traveling in a circle so that we come upon the same opportunity again and again, but we are traveling in a straight line so that when we have passed an opportunity it is gone forever and ever. The poet sings,

Hope springs eternal in the human breast,

but all of us know very well that there is a time when if we do not use our opportunities hope turns to despair in our hearts.

"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide," said James Russell Lowell, and if in that momentous moment the nation or the man neglects to decide, the opportunity is taken away. You know how it was with the Jewish nation. They might have been the greatest nation the sun ever shone upon, God offered them such prosperity again and again through his prophets, and at last in the gracious words of his beloved Son; but they turned their backs on

the offer and preferred their own ways, and the offer was withdrawn, and they are scattered to the ends of the earth today—a people without a country.

So it is in Christian work. God gives you and me chances to save men's souls. If we idly neglect them—the opportunity to do that saving work soon goes, and we are held responsible for the loss of those souls. I often ask myself at night, if God's death angel should move over our own and our neighbor's homes, and before morning should touch here and there a brow, and still here and there a heart, could not many of them say, "No man cared for my soul"? Would not some of us have to wail over the opportunity to do something for them that we neglected and lost? Ah, there are coming to some who are here now recollections of an hour when you looked on a dead face, when you looked down upon the closed eyes, and when the bitterest thought you could have was: "Oh, I missed my opportunity to save him! I missed my opportunity to speak the tender word! I missed my opportunity to touch his life for God!" O men and women, let us heed Paul's words, "As we

have opportunity, let us do good unto all men." Let us redeem the time, make the most of the opportunities which God has given us. Men and women every day are disappearing from our shops, our stores, our churches, our streets, our homes. Many of them—there is no use trying to hide the fact—many of them are going out of this world without one item of preparation, and they are dropping headlong into the world of the lost. You and I have an opportunity to meet these people every day. We do meet them. We have an opportunity to say the saving word, but we do not say it. And they are lost. Think about it. For I do not know where there is in the wide universe any fountain in which we may wash from our hands the blood of lost souls.

But *it is not of the opportunity to save others* that the text speaks, *but of the opportunity to be saved oneself*. That time passes, too, and when it is gone we have no other chance. God not only tells us what we must do to be saved, but he tells us when we must do it. Men have a notion that they can delay or parley with God's offer of salvation. But the word of God says plainly, Now or never!

Now is the day of salvation. Now is the accepted time. God fixes the time for us, and we have no choice but to accept it or reject it.

We may fairly say that one of the auspicious times in which to accept Christ is when we are young. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth," the wise man said. If the summer of youth passes away, and a person is unsaved, he is unlikely ever to be saved. He may die in youth. Life is just as uncertain for the young as it is for the old, the emaciated, the sick. I have buried as many young people in my ministry as old people. Sometimes a poor invalid with all the chances against him crawls on to eighty or eighty-five years of age, kept up by tonics and plasters and canes, while hundreds of muscular, hardy young fellows drop out under some sudden stroke.

I often think of a hardy, robust young fellow, whom I met one summer in the country. He was a strapping athlete. I felt like a pigmy beside him. He expected to live seventy years still. He said so. And it looked as if he would. His limbs were lithe, his lungs were sound, his pulse was strong, his

eyes were clear. But in less than three weeks from the time that he said he expected to live seventy years more, he was dead from typhoid fever. I often think of a young man who was in our own church fellowship. How many times he bade me feel his ironlike muscles and said to me, "Don't you wish you were as strong as I am?" One Sunday morning he tarried after the worship, and after a little conversation I promised to render him a certain service in a month's time. But in two weeks' time he was dead. If you are young and vigorous insurance companies will take you as a good risk, no doubt, but you are a risk still, and no one in the world would have the audacity to say: "You will live a year, you will live a month, a week, a day, or even an hour." And even if you do live it is not at all certain that you will have another chance to accept Christ. There can be no doubt that some men in youth so utterly reject the gospel that God forever after lets them alone. They slam the door of their hearts in God's face and tell him to be gone, and then when afterward they call him to come back they find no place for repentance though

they seek it carefully and with tears. Eternal affront has been done to God's Spirit, and the man's name is written down in God's book among the doomed.

I have read of an old man who took a little child on his knee and told him to begin to love God at once, to pray to him, to try to serve him. The child looked up into his face and said, "Why do you not serve God?" The old man bent his head and said brokenly, "I would, child, but my heart is hard."

Some men so lose their religious feeling after rejecting God in their youth that they can go out into the cemetery and read on the gravestones the names of the boys and girls who sixty years before wrote their names side by side with their own on their slates at school—and they can see their own approaching end thus staring them in the face and yet, unsaved as they are, be unmoved. The summer is ended, and they are unsaved, forever unsaved.

A revival time also may appropriately be called a summer season of God's grace. I know there are people in these days who do not believe in revivals. I do. I believe God

does. I should like to have Pentecost repeated in New York every year, and to see hundreds and thousands of saved ones swept into the churches in a day. Some of you who are here have passed through revival seasons unsaved. You have seen your friends make their confession of faith. For you not to be saved required more resolution and determination than under God would have made you a Christian. But you held out against it, and though you are a respectable, refined man or woman you know that still you are not a Christian. You are living without God, and you are on your way to a death without hope. The summer is ended, and you are not saved.

And it is a great deal better to come to God when you are well than to put it off until sickness comes. You may never be sick. There are so many ways of going out of life suddenly, by flood, or fire, or earthquake, or lightning-flash, by electric shock, by crashing rail trains, or a fatal slip on the street. Some time ago a school-teacher was walking along the street in this city of New York. A woman was cleaning the windows in the upper stories of a house. A little

extra pressure pushed out from the sash a pane of glass that had become loose. It fell in such a way and with such force that this school-teacher who was passing just at that moment was decapitated by it. Some time ago a young man friend of some people who are in our own congregation went to bed early after his day's work. The streets that evening were full of roysterers. This young man was steady in his habits, and cared nothing for the carnival that fills our streets on a New Year's eve. But while he lay abed and asleep somebody who was celebrating, fired a shot. He shot at random. But the bullet went through the window of that young man's room and found its mark in the sleeper there, and killed him. Had he been shot on the street people would have said, "If he had been at home and in bed where he ought to have been, he would have been safe." But there in his bed, where presumably he would be safe, the death summons came to him without any one's intention. When they were blasting for the subway down at Forty-second and Fourth Avenue, a man was taking a little rest in his room one afternoon in the Murray Hill

Hotel. No one anticipated any danger. But suddenly there was an explosion outside and a mass of rock crashed through the hotel window, and this man was crushed to death in his bed. There are a thousand ways in which a man may be called away suddenly, allowing him no time to repent.

And then even if a man is sick—often he dies with brain befogged. The friends stand about the bed weeping, and the dying man looks on too dull to know what it all means. His pulse gets up to a hundred or more—then it weakens, 90, 80, 60, 50—then a flutter, and the gates of the body open, and the soul passes out. The summer is ended, and he is unsaved. Ah me! if there is one thing I do not wish to be bothered about on my death-bed, it is the safety of my soul. I want that matter settled long before. God forbid that any one of us should put off the most momentous question we ever have to deal with until the last, feeble, languishing, delirious hour of life. You will have no time then. You may plead with death to wait until you are prepared, but death waits for nothing. However you may resist, his icy finger will touch your heart, and your pulse

will be still, and touch your lungs, and your breath will be gone. And if you are not saved before that time, you never will be.

Again the text suggests that *if a man is not brought to penitence by God's love, he will not be by God's wrath.* One is like the warmth of summer. The other is like bleak winter.

I believe in bidding men to flee from the wrath to come, of course. I believe in exhorting men to fear Him who after he hath killed, hath power to cast both soul and body into hell. I believe in persuading men by the terrors of the law as Paul did. I believe not only in telling the righteous that it will be well with him, but in making it clear to the wicked that it will be ill with him. But yet I cannot escape the conviction that it is the exhibited goodness of God that leads men to repentance. The story of God's love breaks more hearts than the thunders of God's wrath. Calvary has more power to make the heart contrite than Sinai has.

Isaac Hopper, a Quaker who lived in Philadelphia in the old days, had his attention called to a colored waiter, who had the name Cain. Cain was remarkable for his

profanity. Neither persuasion nor rebuke seemed to have any power to break him of his bad habit. One day the Quaker encountered Cain on the street, quarreling and pouring forth a volley of oaths that was enough to make one shudder. Hopper believed in summary punishment, so he had the fellow taken before a magistrate who fined him for blasphemy. They did that in those days. Twenty years later the Quaker met Cain again. His outward appearance was much changed for the worse. His clothing was ragged, and he was thin to emaciation. His appearance touched the Quaker's heart. He stepped up to the colored man, shook hands, and spoke kindly to him. "Does thee remember me, and how I had thee fined for swearing?" "Indeed I do," said the man, "I remember it as though it was yesterday." "Did it do thee any good?" asked the Quaker. "Not a bit," said the man, "it made me mad to have my money taken from me." The good Quaker asked the amount of the fine, estimated the interest on it, and paid Cain back the whole thing, saying, "I meant it for thy good, Cain, and I am sorry I did thee any harm." Cain's countenance

changed, tears rolled down his cheeks, he took the money with many thanks, became a quiet man and was heard to swear no more. I tell you love can do what threatenings cannot, and if love does not avail, nothing will.

Little Harry Moorehouse, the Yorkshire evangelist, told us that when he was at home in Manchester in his boyhood, their family consisted of two brothers, two sisters, and the father, the mother having died. They were poor people, and his brother was a bad boy, a real prodigal, worthless and idle.

One of the sisters said to her father: "Father, I will tell thee what thee ought to do with John. Turn him into the street."

"Why?" asked the father.

"Why," she said, "see how respectable all the rest are, and how bad he is. He is a disgrace to us. Turn him out."

Christmas Day came and the family were all together, including the wayward boy. The old man read a chapter and prayed. Then hoping the occasion would make her heart tender, he turned to the daughter and said, "Well, what are we to do with thy brother now?"

But her heart was hard against him. She

felt shamed and disgraced by him, and she said, " Put him out on the street."

Then the old man turned to one of the friends who had been with them at their Christmas dinner, and put the question to him. He said that he did not like to interfere, but that he thought it might do the young man good to turn him out for a while. Then the old man left his chair, with tears streaming down his face, and put his arms about the bad son's neck and said: " John, thy sister and brother and friend say I should turn thee out. But I am thy poor old father, and I will never put thee in the street, my boy." And the wicked son, who had stood out against everything else with hard heart, melted at the father's love. It was the means of his giving his heart to God, and of making him afterward a noble preacher of the gospel.

O men and women, all the world may turn and leave you, but God commends his love to you by following you while you are a sinner. Though you have slighted him, and grieved him, and crucified Jesus Christ afresh and put him to an open shame, yet instead of turning away he still seeks to save you.

What a marvel of love this is! Will you not respond to it? If a man can live unmoved by such evidence of God's love for him there is little hope of his being moved by anything else. If God's gracious smile does not win the heart, I very much doubt whether it will be won by God's frown.

You remember that once as Jesus was passing along the road a rich young ruler saw him, ran in before him, kneeled down, and asked him how he might win eternal life. The Master answered him, and looking on him loved him. The young man must have felt the power of that love, but he arose from his knees and went away—went away forever, I suppose; for if the world had more power over him than Christ's love when he knelt there at Jesus' feet, I think that when he had once gone away, there was no power in the vast universe strong enough to draw him back. Do not be like him. Come to Christ at once. For if you can go away indifferent to Jesus Christ when you have heard his love for you so plainly declared, you go away into utter hopelessness forever.

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